



(8)

jLenski

Little girl of nineteen hundred.

TULSA CITY-COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Any resident of Tulsa County may borrow books.

A fine must be paid for each book kept overtime (Sundays and holidays included).

Books may be returned to any library agency in Tulsa County.

WV

Don't forget to feed the CHICKENS!

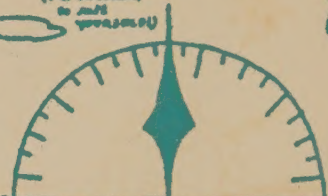
CHICKEN COOP

Hopalong Badger (with shotgun)

Don't forget to feed the DEER!

STUCK THIS WAY (Don't know how to get out!)

(No directions to help you find the way out!)



A PLAN of the HOME of the BAXTER FAMILY in the Town of PLEASANTVILLE in the State of OHIO in the year 1900

(on the Co-5)

(on the W-10)

It must be Monday!

SWEET-APPLE TREE

Get a drink of water from the spring!

BEGIN HERE

GO IN at the FRONT GATE (but don't get LOST!)

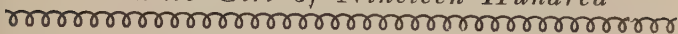


Trail map to find the HOUSE





A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred



BOOKS BY LOIS LENSKI

Roundabout America Series

WE LIVE BY THE RIVER	BERRIES IN THE SCOOP
WE LIVE IN THE SOUTH	PROJECT BOY
PEANUTS FOR BILLY BEN	WE LIVE IN THE CITY

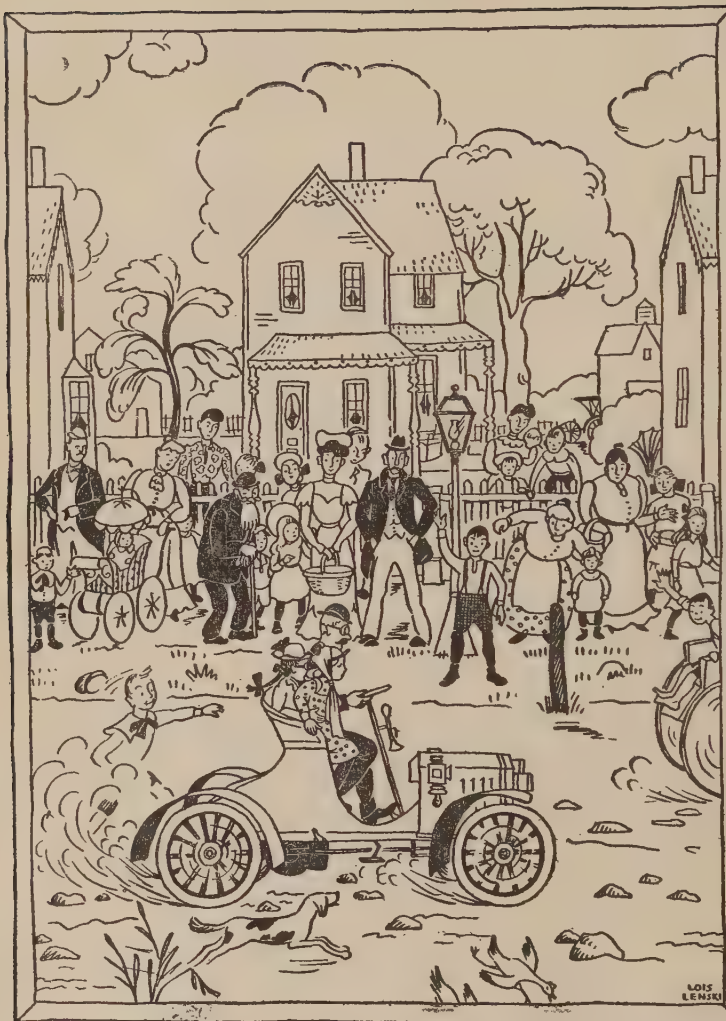
American Regional Series

SAN FRANCISCO BOY	CORN-FARM BOY
MAMA HATTIE'S GIRL	PRAIRIE SCHOOL
TEXAS TOMBOY	BLUE RIDGE BILLY
COTTON IN MY SACK	STRAWBERRY GIRL
BOOM TOWN BOY	BAYOU SUZETTE

JUDY'S JOURNEY

Other Books

INDIAN CAPTIVE	PHEBE FAIRCHILD: HER BOOK
PURITAN ADVENTURE	OCEAN-BORN MARY
BLUEBERRY CORNERS	SURPRISE FOR MOTHER
BOUND GIRL OF COBBLE HILL	A LITTLE GIRL OF 1900
A-GOING TO THE WESTWARD	



Flora was never so frightened
in her life.



A LITTLE GIRL
of
NINETEEN
HUNDRED



Written and Illustrated by
LOIS LENSKI

Author of
"SKIPPING VILLAGE"



Published by
J.B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
Philadelphia

Copyright 1928, 1956 by
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

All Rights Reserved

Sixth Impression

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 28-21491
Printed in the United States of America



To
My Little Sister
whose
Real Name is not
Milly,
but
Miriam



Table of Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE FAMILY	I
II. THE COUNTY FAIR	21
III. TROUBLE	41
IV. TRIP TO MICHIGAN	65
V. THE SEWING CIRCLE	89
VI. KEEPING BEES	109
VII. FLORA HERSELF	129
VIII. NEIGHBORS	149
IX. THE FIRST AUTO	173
X. FLORA AGAIN	193



List of Illustrations

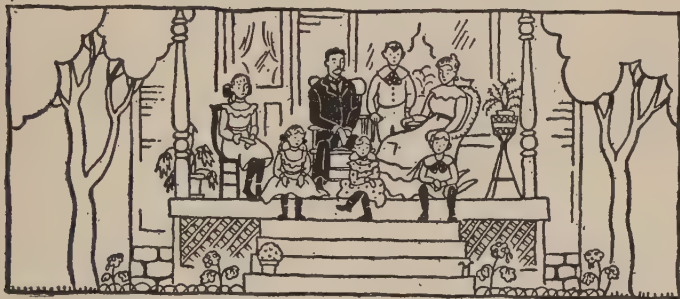
"Flora was never so frightened in her life."	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
"The baby stood up on the seat and looked back."	10
"There were tables and benches made out of boards, so it was very convenient."	30
"Flora watched Mrs. Steeley's baby for a while . . . and wished it would wake up."	56
"Flora held one and Milly held the other."	74
"Flora said it as loud as she could, but her voice seemed to have dried up."	104
"They all stood at the back bedroom window and looked out."	116
"And then Miss Heckle came to call."	136
"A STRANGE MAN with a black mustache came forward."	166
"'Now that I am twelve . . .'"	210



*A
Little Girl
of
Nineteen
Hundred*

CHAPTER I

THE FAMILY



*You have to have some parents,
You can't exist without;
You're apt to have some brothers,
And sisters, too, no doubt.*

*A family may be useful,
Although they're in the way;
"Be good," "Your face is dirty,"
And "Stand up straight," they say.*

*They try to teach you manners,
They help with lessons, too;
Sometimes they are a nuisance,
But on the whole, they'll do.*

Chapter I

THE FAMILY



ONCE there was a little girl whose name was Flora Baxter. She had pink cheeks and blue eyes. Her brother, Jerry, who liked to tease, said the blue changed to green whenever she wore a green dress. Her hair was brown and she wore it in two braids, looped up and tied with ribbons. She got new hair ribbons every year for Christmas.

Flora belonged to a large family. First, there were Mr. and Mrs. Baxter, or Father and Mother, and then there were five children. That made seven altogether. The children made stair steps, beginning with Ella, the oldest, at the top, and ending with Milly, the youngest, at the bottom. Flora was the fourth in line, that is, next to the youngest. The dining-room table had to have two extra leaves in it all the time, and a third when there was company.

Ella was the oldest and most dignified, and at

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

twelve, began to wish for the time to come when she could put her hair up and her dresses down.

Jerry was next and he was very particular. At the age of four, he had to be spanked every Monday morning because he insisted upon wearing his Sunday clothes. Later on, he spent hours getting his hair smoothly brushed. But he yelled just as loud as Ned when Mother washed his ears.

Ned was third, always giggling and up to mischief.

Flora was fourth and Milly last. Milly was the baby of the family. But she wasn't spoiled at all. She loved to wait on all the others and do everything they asked her to do.

So that was the family.

They grew so fast that Father threatened to put bricks on their heads if they didn't stop it. The door frame between the kitchen and dining room, where the measuring was done, was black with marks, going up higher and higher each year. And Father promised a silver dollar to the one who first caught up to him.

While the children were small, the Baxter family lived in Smithfield. Smithfield was a city with red brick sidewalks and street-cars and a park. Mother loved Smithfield. Father was a minister and preached in a big church with a red steeple every Sunday.

When Flora was six and Milly four, the Baxter

The Family

family moved from Smithfield to Pleasantville. That important event took place one October ninth, a day never to be forgotten.

Although their years at Smithfield soon became only a memory, there were certain things the little girls never forgot. There was something about the atmosphere of the parlor, that always lingered in their minds. It had a musty smell from being closed up so much of the time. There was a fascination about the furnishings, the mantelpiece of shiny green tiles, the wall-paper curly-cues, the life-size crayon portrait of Father, which the ladies of the church had given Mother for a surprise, the bay window filled with plants and the beautiful lace curtains,—there was a charm about all the little details of the room that stayed in their memories and rose up vividly with any mention of Smithfield.

A few outstanding events made a deep impression. There was a time when Father's Night-Blooming Cereus bloomed,—Father was raising cactus then,—and crowds of people came from all over town at midnight to see it. Flora and Milly were allowed to stay up for the occasion. There was the time when Father bought his first camera, and took the children to the park to take their pictures with it. While they were in wading, Father had to call to Flora not to hold her dress up so high. There was another time at the dinner table, when Mother cried, and the whole world was upset. . . . Little

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

memories like these, the girls took with them when they moved to Pleasantville.

While the packing was going on, Flora and Milly stayed with neighbors,—Flora with one neighbor, and Milly with another. The neighbors themselves were not so bad, but being separated was horrible, and not even chocolate cake for supper could make up for that. Flora's neighbor probably had a real name, but to Flora she was always simply "the fat lady." All through supper Flora was very brave and managed to keep back the tears. But just as she pushed back her chair, the room was darkened by strange faces and outstretched open hands appearing suddenly at the window,—unexplainable, terrifying, and when the fat lady could not quiet her she put her to bed in despair, and Flora cried herself to sleep.

The next day was the Farewell Party, and Flora and Milly looked at each other across the wide expanse of a huge room filled with people, Flora still in the charge of the fat lady who insisted upon holding her on her lap, even though she had no lap to speak of. Flora was miserable with sliding off so often and being lifted back up,—again and again. Milly's lap was a man's lap, and she kept sliding down between, but managed fairly well because she was used to Father's.

The ladies gave Father and Mother presents. Father's was a box of red satin suspenders, which

The Family

were to ornament the bottom bureau drawer in the spare room for many a year to come. Mother's was an ivory fan with ostrich feathers, which was to keep the suspenders company through the years. The ladies cried a lot, and finally Mother broke down too because she really did not want to leave Smithfield at all. Mother always liked the city and hated to move to such a small town in the country.

At last the time came to get on the train. Flora and Milly had never had a ride on the train before, so they felt very important. What a time the family had getting on with all the baggage and boxes and bundles. Ned and Flora had Mother's pattern basket, with the covered top, to take care of. Inside was Joe Bill, the cat. His real name was Joe Bill Maltese Hopfoot Kitty Baxter, but that was too long for everyday use, so he was called Joe Bill for short. Joe Bill didn't like the basket much, especially when Ned and Flora were carrying it between them and couldn't prevent its jiggling. He growled and meowed at a great rate, and Flora was terribly worried for fear a policeman might come and take him away from them. But after they got on the train he was all right, for Flora took him out of the basket and kept him quiet in her lap, and he liked that.

Besides the cat basket, there was a cage with two canaries. Father had sold or given away all the others, and had decided not to keep canaries any

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

more. Ella took care of them. Jerry had a shoe box filled with the lunch, and Father and Mother took care of the suit-cases and extra bundles. All the furniture had been shipped in a baggage car. Father had chartered a car because there was so much. Mother said it was something like moving a menagerie to move the Baxter family.

Flora and Milly thought the red plush seats in the train were very elegant. There weren't many people in the seats, so they had a lot of fun trying them all, to see which was the most comfortable. They were just sampling the drinking water, when the conductor called, "All abroad!" and the train began to move.

Father and Mother had been very busy talking to all the people on the platform, who had come to see them off. As the train moved out they all waved and shouted, "Good-by, good-by!" Jerry and Ned leaned out of the car window and waved and waved until Smithfield was only a fly-speck in the distance.

As the train started, it jerked badly, and Flora and Milly both fell down in the aisle. Father came and picked them up and set them down in a red plush seat. And then the train began to go, slowly at first, but gradually faster and faster. Soon it went so fast that the landscape whirled! It seemed to be going round in circles. The trees in the distance came swinging round as if to hit the train, and the cornfields in the front went swinging back

The Family

where the trees were. The telegraph poles seemed to hit the window each time as they whirled past. It made Flora quite dizzy and she felt a little sick.

She turned her eyes away from the window, only to see the aisle jumping up and down and the red plush seats bobbing about. Hats and packages began to fall down from the racks and the air was full of cinders. Jerry had his window open in front of the girls, and was sticking his head out so as not to miss anything. The conductor came along, grabbed him by the shoulder, and, pointing to a sign up in front, asked him if he couldn't read. Jerry looked up meekly and read slowly:

DO NOT PUT YOUR HEAD OUT OF THE WINDOW
IT IS DANGEROUS

So Jerry put his head in and closed the window. But not before Milly got a cinder in her eye which made her cry so hard that it came out of itself and Father had to put his handkerchief back in his pocket.

Flora felt very queer for a long time and closed her eyes and wished the train wouldn't go so fast. But the more she wished, the faster it went. Once when she opened her eyes for a moment, she saw that Milly was not sitting in the seat beside her. She got up courage enough to look around over her shoulder and there she saw Milly running to

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Mother. Then Mother jumped up and picked Milly up and went running back to the rear of the car. Then Flora closed her eyes again, feeling too queer herself to wonder about it very much. Later on when she began to feel better, and had seen Mother and Milly make the trip a number of times, and then saw Milly settle down to sleep on Mother's lap, she asked Father what was the matter. But Father said, "Oh, nothing, do *you* feel all right?" And Jerry said, "I never knew before that people get *green* when they are car-sick!"

After a time the conductor came around for the tickets, and Father gave him a whole handful, but most of them were Half Fares. He had a prickly mustache and seemed much more friendly this time. He pretended to have a hard time to get the children all counted because they were so scattered about in the seats. After he punched the tickets, he took some other red and green ones and punched them and stuck them in the band of Father's hat. And the children all wondered what for.

Suddenly the train stopped at a strange town. A man and his wife got off, and Flora looked out of the window and saw their relations kissing them and driving them off in a surrey. And some more people got on. They were a woman with a baby and an old lady who was probably the baby's grandmother. They sat down in the seat in front of Flora and Milly. The baby stood up on the seat and looked



The baby stood up on the seat and looked back.

The Family

back at the little girls and made them laugh. Then its mother gave it a banana to eat. It was a pretty soft banana, so it got its face all covered with banana, and its dress too, and it didn't have on any bib. Flora and Milly couldn't help laughing, it was so funny.

Pretty soon its mother opened up her little brown bag and took out a wash-cloth and washed its face. Then it climbed down in the aisle and started to go for a walk. Flora got up and took hold of its hand and they walked up and down many times, and the baby smiled at everybody and waved its hand by-by.

Then it was lunch time and Mother had to collect all the children and make them take three seats in a row on one side. Milly and Ned and Flora sat in one seat, and Jerry and Ella in front of them, and Father and Mother behind with the lunch box. Mother unpacked and Father passed things around, and it seemed very strange to be eating in a train and not around a table. Milly was the only one who wasn't hungry. Any one who has never had a ride on a train and eaten lunch on it, could not possibly imagine how good it tasted.

After lunch, the children spread themselves out again in various seats over the train. Jerry and Ned explored everywhere, going into all the other coaches and riding on the platforms and talking to the conductor and asking him questions. Ella kept her canary cage on the seat beside her.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Flora and Milly took Joe Bill out of his basket and played with him. The strange baby came and stood in the aisle and watched, but kept its distance. Milly opened up one of the straw suit-cases and took out a doll's nightgown, and dressed Joe Bill up in it. Flora made a bonnet for him by tying a handkerchief over his head. Joe Bill always was a good cat!

But all of a sudden he got tired of being dressed up. He jumped off Milly's lap, almost on top of the baby's head, and scampered off down the aisle. The baby screamed at the top of its voice and its mother came running. Joe Bill had a hard time running with his nightgown on, but he went almost as fast as an undressed cat. Down the aisle, under the seats, over Father's and Mother's laps, across the aisle, on top of the suit-cases, and under the seats again. Ella grabbed her coat and covered her bird-cage quickly, then stood on her seat and held it up high in the air. Suddenly she and the bird-cage and all came down with a thump when the train gave a jerk.

The whole family gave chase. Joe Bill was never so hard to catch before. But a train and a nightgown together seemed to be too much for him. At last Father caught him, on top of the back of one of the seats, ready to spring, aiming for the rack that held Mother's hat. Father said afterwards he probably mistook the feathers for a bird. Mother

The Family

had to hold him while Flora took his nightgown off. Then Mother decided that the only wise thing to do was to put him back to bed in the pattern basket and close the lid tight and fasten it. Trains do not agree with cats as a rule.

The children sat down to get their breaths and rest awhile. They began to count the telegraph poles. Flora was thinking how dull train-riding was, when all at once they heard a scream and a thump. That bad baby had climbed way up on the back of one of the seats and, when the train stopped suddenly, it fell! Father ran and the baby's mother ran too, and its grandmother, and they all picked it up to see if it had been hurt. It cried long and loud and made more noise than the train. They stood it up on its feet and it started to walk again. So it wasn't hurt much. Its mother gave it another gooey banana, and it kept on smiling and laughing and got its face smeared up again as badly as before.

All this was so exciting that Flora quite forgot that it was her first ride on a train. She got so used to the motion of the train that she didn't feel the least bit sick any more. And Milly was better and not so pale. Every time the train stopped, the girls wanted to get off because they thought it must be Pleasantville. But Mother kept saying, "No, not yet," and "Just wait awhile," and "Now we'll soon be there."

The conductor came and took the red and green

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

tickets out of Father's hat and a minute later poked his head in through the door and called, "*Change cars for Pleasantville!*"

So they had to change cars.

The whole family made a scramble for their hats and coats and baggage, and in their rush forgot to say good-by to the bad baby or wave their hands to it. They had to stand on the platform under a great big covered roof for a long time. Father growled because there weren't any seats. But Mother said not to mind because it wouldn't be very long to wait, and besides they'd all been sitting in the train all morning, anyhow. Milly sat on a suit-case because she was so tired from having missed her nap. Joe Bill meowed loud enough for the whole world to hear him. They stood and stood and got tired of standing. Jerry grabbed Ned's hat, and then they started to fight and Father had to tell them to stop. They were all glad when the train came at last, though Flora and Milly were frightened and hid their faces in Mother's skirts when the big black monster came roaring upon the tracks so close to them.

This time they did not make themselves comfortable on the train, because Father said the ride would not be a long one. They didn't even take off their hats. The conductor soon came round for their tickets. Flora asked Mother why Father had to pay all over again, and Mother explained that the

The Family

first conductor had only taken half of the tickets, and Father had kept the ends put away safely in his pocket. It was arranged this way so that the second conductor would know that Father had really paid for the ride, and that the whole family was not riding for nothing. Nobody rides for nothing on trains. This time the conductor took all that was left and didn't put anything in the band of Father's hat.

At last he came to the door and called, "Pleasantville!" in a very loud voice. He seemed to know where the Baxters were going, for he smiled broadly as he called again, "Everybody off at Pleasantville!"

And then they all got off.

And that was the end of Flora's first train ride.

What a funny little depot, with no big roof at all, and only a big round stove and two or three benches. What strange looking people to shake hands with. Why did they talk so much, when a person was so tired? What a funny muddy street and what funny little stores and houses.

It seemed to Flora a long, long walk to get to the new house and she didn't like the strangers standing on the street corners and staring or looking out of windows. She held Mother's hand very tight and they walked fast. Father had to carry Milly, she was so little and so tired. Several strangers came along and helped carry the baggage

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

and bundles. And then they came to the house!

The children forgot how tired they were. Jerry and Ned made a dash for the apple tree at the side and started to climb up. Milly woke up and she and Flora ran all over the house. This is the kitchen, and this must be the parlor, and a big brick porch with a pump painted green. One step up between the kitchen and the dining room to make Mother tired. Gingerbread woodwork and transoms and none of the curtains would be long enough. A winding stairway and in the bedroom wide, wide window sills. Mine! Mine! Window sills enough for many, many dolls. Window sills like Alice Clark's back in Smithfield. Mine! Mine! Wonderful window sills! Two little hearts were content, and two little girls thought Pleasantville the most wonderful place in the world as they dropped off to sleep that night in a neighbor's bed.

The next day all the furniture came up on a dray, load after load, and the name of the man who drove the dray was Chris Ferguson. The funniest load of all was the last one,—one of Father's big canary cages, six feet high, with no canaries in it (Father gave up keeping canaries when the family decided to move), but a tin dog, painted red, about a foot high, standing up on wheels in the middle, alone. Somebody gave it to Milly as a parting gift, and Father stuck it into the cage at the last minute because he couldn't think of another place to put it.

The Family

All day long Mother was kept busy telling the men where to put things. Jerry and Ned carried in most of the small pieces and saved the others a lot of steps. So many feet passing in and out brought in a lot of mud, but Mother said not to worry about the tracks, they could all be scrubbed up later. Ella sorted out the pots and pans and brooms and things for the kitchen. It took her and Mrs. Giffen, a strange lady who came and offered to help, the whole afternoon to dig up the china out of the barrels, and what a relief to find that not a single piece was broken! Mrs. Giffen helped to cook the meals, too, and made delicious gingerbread for supper. A queer boy came and stood in the yard all day, and pointed at everything he saw, and said, "What's that?" but nobody paid any attention to him.

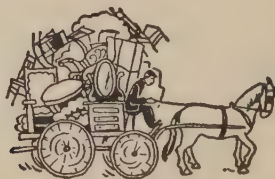
The little white iron bed, which was Flora's and Milly's, was put into "the little front room" with its sloping walls and pointed dormer and rosebud wall-paper, to stay there for many a long day. When night came the furniture was all in the house, standing around in great confused heaps, waiting to be put in order after the carpets were tacked down and become a part of the strange surroundings. The beds were all up, and Mother found sheets and bedding, so all the Baxters slept in their own beds, and that seemed a little bit like home.

On the third day, a strange man tacked all the

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

carpets down. And Father and Mother had a hard time deciding how to arrange the furniture. By the time some of the pictures were hung on the walls, and the lamps were put on the tables, everything began to look familiar again and the emptiness disappeared.

The next day and the next and the next and a great many more were spent in getting acquainted. The people who looked so strange on that first day suddenly became friends and dropped in to help and visit. The muddy streets and grassy sidewalks turned into familiar pathways. The little stores were places of enchantment where one ventured alone without the protecting nearness of Mother. The fields and meadows and orchards and vacant lots were unexplored kingdoms of thrilling adventure. The neighbor children turned into the most enterprising and satisfying of companions. And the funny little houses and the church and the stores turned suddenly into one's own dearly loved Town.



CHAPTER II

THE COUNTY FAIR



*Apples and quilts,
Pumpkins so fat;
Hand-painted china—
Just think of that!*

*Merry-go-rounds,
Peanuts and pop;
Be sure to miss nothing,
Walk till you drop.*

*Side-shows and races,
How people stare;
Hold tight to your mother,
When you go to the Fair!*

Chapter II

THE COUNTY FAIR



HE next fall after the Baxters moved to Pleasantville, they decided to go to the Fair. It was held in September, in the town of Banksville, the County Seat, eight miles away. The neighbors talked a great deal

about it and said they must not miss it.

So Mother decided that it would be nice to borrow a surrey and take the whole family. Father said afterwards that he would never do it again and that he had had enough Fair to last him all his life. Of course, if Milly had not gotten lost, and if Mother had not decided to buy a phaëton, and if it had not been for the storm, Father might not have gotten so discouraged.

The family got up early and Ella and Flora made sandwiches and boiled the eggs hard before breakfast. Father and Jerry had brought the surrey over from the neighbor's the night before and they hitched Ben up while the lunch was being packed.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Then they all flew to get dressed and by nine o'clock were ready to start. Father and Milly and Ned sat in the front seat, and Mother and Ella and Flora in the back. Every one knows that not even a surrey is big enough for a family of seven. Jerry was left out, so he went along with Bill Barker's family in theirs. Milly was squeezed into the middle in front and Flora was squeezed into the middle in the back.

The Barkers started off right behind the Baxters, and soon the Rogers family went whizzing past in their spring wagon. They managed to find room for *their* whole family by putting boards across the back for seats. They waved their hands and called "Hello!" and "Good-by!" but the Baxters didn't like their dust much. So Father decided to overtake them, and how the children shouted and yelled when he did it. Soon the Rogers' horse, children, spring wagon and all were left far behind drowned in a cloud of dust. By the time they got to Banks-ville they were in a long procession and were covered with dust. Mother made the girls hold their handkerchiefs over their mouths and noses and keep their eyes closed. And Ella nearly cried about the white satin ribbon on her hat.

But they forgot their discomfort in the excitement when they reached the Fair Grounds. Such a yelling and screaming and blowing of horns and shouting! Buggies and surreys and wagons and rigs

The County Fair

of every description driving in from every direction. Everybody dressed up and excited. People running, people walking, people strolling, people standing.

Thursday was Free Day, so nobody had to stop to buy tickets at the gate. Inside there was more confusion than ever. All the horses and rigs bumping into each other and getting in other people's way. Somebody always turning around in the wrong place. Horses balking and backing and neighing. People yelling and screaming and shouting. Children running everywhere and trying to get run over.

At last Father found a good place under a shady tree, not too far from the entrance gate because he wanted to be able to start for home before other people did. There they unhitched Ben and tied him to a hitching post and drew the surrey up beside him. They left the baskets of lunch in the surrey and all the hats and coats they didn't want to carry with them.

When the Barkers came they hitched their horse right beside Ben and the boys all went off together. Ella found Carrie Cook and some other girls who begged her to come along. So that left Milly to take Father's hand and Flora to take Mother's. Mother said that lunch would be at twelve o'clock and everybody should come back to the surrey for it.

They went into the Chicken Building first. Chickens with top-knots, chickens with trousers on their

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

legs to keep them warm, chickens with long trains like ladies. Bantams, baby chicks, pigeons, roosters, hens, pullets. Plumes, feathers, chicken feed, eggs. Crowing, cackling, fighting; scratching, clucking, squawking. Like a great huge chicken coop, but no place for the poor things to run, each one shut up in a box with bars in front.

Flora began, "Father, why don't they let them loose?"

And Milly, "Oh, don't go yet, Father, let's just look at these!"

But Father went rushing on and didn't listen. This was before Father was specializing in Rhode Island Reds, so he insisted upon hurrying straight through and out the other side. In later years when Father and Ned took up chickens seriously, it was hard to tear Father away from the Chicken Building.

Then they went through the Cow and Pig Building and saw many cows and many pigs of all colors, sizes and shapes. Big awful cows as black as night with long black horns. Huge grunting pigs who must have had a bath, they looked so clean. Baby calves that teetered when they walked. Baby pigs that slopped and splashed and had no table manners at all. Father went through that building quickly, too.

Then they came to the Farm Implement Building, but they did not get very much excited about Farm

The County Fair

Implements. Father went through that building quickly, too.

The Vehicle Building was next. It was filled with Buggies and Surreys and Traps and Carriages and all kinds of shiny new vehicles. It was hard to get Mother away from there because she was thinking of buying a new phaëton. She said at first that she would just look around a little bit, and, of course, she didn't intend to buy. Then who should come up and shake hands but Mr. R. B. Babcock, the Hardware Store man from Pleasantville, and strange to say, he seemed to be selling the vehicles. He was a fine talker and it was hard to get away from him. He sounded like some of the book agents that often came to the front door at home, that Mother had such a hard time to get rid of. He had learned his piece by heart and nobody could stop him, not even Father, who was getting impatient.

Mother and Milly and Flora tried all the buggies, but Mother did not like the Piano Box ones, because they made you sit up so high, but of course they had more room for bundles in the box at the back, and that was a great advantage. But Mother thought the *lines* of the phaëton were so much better, though Flora and Milly did not know what she meant by that. They did like the red wheels and the rubber tires of the one that she finally picked out, and it was so comfortable that the three of them were not a bit crowded when they all got in.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Father stood around and grunted and pulled out his watch every time Mr. R. B. Babcock began to talk. That meant that it was getting near lunch time. So Mother told him she'd take it and he tied a bright red tag on it, marked "Sold." Flora wondered vaguely, as Father rushed off to the surrey, how they would ever get it home with them, for she knew that the surreyload of people was already as much as Ben could pull.

"Will you tie it on behind, Mother?" asked Milly, whose thoughts had been running in the same direction.

"Oh, no, dear," explained Mother. "It has to be left here until the Fair closes at the end of the week, and then Mr. Babcock will see about getting it home to us."

"May I have the first ride in it, please, Mother?" asked Flora.

"Oh, no, *I* want the first!" chimed in Milly, who usually copied Flora and her ideas.

"Well, we won't decide about that now," said Mother. "I'd advise all little girls to be on their good behavior," and they knew what that meant.

It was after twelve o'clock when they got to the surrey, but they were the first ones there. Soon Ella came running up, panting, and said she had had to hunt and hunt for the surrey before she found it.

"Of course those boys couldn't be on time," said Father, and kept on pulling out his watch. After

The County Fair

standing and waiting a while for them, Father said, "We can't wait any longer." So Mother and Ella took the baskets and went out to the grove, a nice, shady place, some distance away from the buildings and over on one side of the race tracks. There were tables and benches made out of boards, and so it was very convenient. Mother and Ella had a hard time finding an empty table, because all the other people were eating their lunch too, but very soon one family who had begun early, gathered up their things and left, so they took their table. By the time the boys got back with excuses of not being able to find out the time because they had no watches and couldn't see any clocks anywhere,—by the time they got back and Father took them and Flora and Milly over to the grove, Mother had the white tablecloth spread out and everything ready and waiting.

Jerry and Ned had an exciting tale to tell of a magician in a tent and a snake charmer and a fat lady that weighed four hundred pounds. They didn't go *inside*, because, of course, it was *very* expensive, for boys with only twenty-five cents to spend for everything put together, candy and ice-cream and Merry-go-rounds and all. Besides, Father always said, "No side-shows!" and they didn't want to go in anyhow. But they saw all this *for nothing* on a platform outside, and the snake charmer had a real live snake around her neck!

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

"I'm going to try it at home, the very first snake I catch," bragged Ned.

But Jerry laughed at him and said, "You! I'd like to see you! Why, you'd be afraid to touch a dead snake, let alone a live one!"

"No, I wouldn't!" retorted Ned. "I helped Wallie Thorn skin his and dry it and nail it on a board. . . ."

But just then Mother changed the subject, and asked if any one knew what time the Races would begin. Mother loved horses very much, because she used to have a Texas pony of her own and go horse-back riding when she was a girl. Father said the Races began at half-past-three, Standard time, not Sun time; but they'd better get to the Grand Stand by three, if they wanted to get any seats.

The children were all too much excited to appreciate how good the lunch was, and Jerry and Ned wanted to leave before the Devil's Food Cake was cut, but Mother called them back. After lunch, they all scattered in different directions, with parting instructions from Father that those who were not going to the Races were to come to the surrey promptly at five, to start for home.

Father and Mother and Flora and Milly first put the lunch baskets back in the surrey and then went through the Agricultural Building. Father went a little more slowly here. Prize pumpkins, prize apples, prize grapes and prize pears. Enor-



There were tables and benches made out of boards, so it was very convenient.

The County Fair

mous, unreal, almost magical. Food for giants and ogres, not for ordinary people. Prize loaves of bread, prize buns, prize cakes, prize cookies. First prize red, second prize blue, tags hanging everywhere. Prize jellies, prize preserves, prize canned cherries. How many cellars to hold them all! How many meals to eat them all up! In the next room, prize quilts, prize comforts, prize bedspreads. *Silk* quilts, *silk* comforts, *silk* bedspreads! These for Kings and Queens and Princesses! Mother had to say "Don't point!" every few minutes, but it didn't do much good.

Then they went through the Fine Arts Building. Pictures hanging on the walls and from the rafters. Not an inch of wall space left. Pictures of moonlights and dead fish and yards and yards of roses. All copied by hand! Red and blue prize tags everywhere. And in the next room, Hand-painted China. Cups and saucers and fruit dishes covered with grapes and rose buds so lifelike you felt like picking them up. And farther on, beautiful examples of that newest invention, Burnt Wood Work! Necktie racks and handkerchief boxes and glove boxes. First Prize won by a marvelous waste paper basket with the head of a Gibson Girl on the side.

It was in the next room, where the school children's drawings were, that Milly got lost. Father and Mother had just found the ones from the school at home, and were hunting to see if they could find

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Ella's or Jerry's name in the corner of any of the drawings. Mr. and Mrs. Smeezle happened to come along just then, and had a great deal to say.

After they left, Mother looked around, and Milly was gone. Father hadn't seen her and Flora hadn't seen her. *She was gone!* Mother told Flora to stay right where she was, and she and Father went in opposite directions to look. Soon they came back and said she was not in the building.

"I had hold of her hand just a minute ago," said Father. "She was right here all the time that Mrs. Smeezle was talking."

Father and Mother began to look frightened and Flora was terrified. Milly was gone! Nothing like this had ever happened before!

Flora began to cry and Mother told Father to take her back to the surrey, and she must *stay* there. She didn't want two lost children. One was enough.

Mother could always joke, even when things were very serious, but Father always looked on the dark side of things. If only that Smeezle woman hadn't talked so much. . . .

It was Mother who found the policeman and told him about it. It was Mother who found Ella and the boys and Mr. Barker and Mrs. Smeezle and Mr. Babcock and told them about it and sent them all out to search for Milly. It was Mother who had all the ideas of where she might be and what each one should do.

The County Fair

Flora begged and begged to be allowed to help hunt, because she thought that, since Milly was her own little sister, she ought to be able to find her quicker than anybody else. But Mother was firm and no amount of coaxing did any good. She had to sit in the surrey and wait,—and think about Milly being lost. No one in the family had ever been lost before. It seemed so empty. To be without Milly. The best little sister in the whole world, who ran errands for everybody. Never unwilling, never too tired. And only the night before, in bed, she and Flora had decided to both die at the same time, because neither one could live without the other. And now Milly was gone. *Milly was gone!*

Flora sat in the surrey and the tears rolled down her cheeks. She was sure she would die if they didn't find Milly. She must have sat there a long time. It seemed years. A lady passed by and asked her what she was crying for, but she didn't answer. Other people passed and looked at her, but she didn't notice them. She just sat and sat, and felt as if she never wanted to see or talk to any one else in the world but Milly. After that she went to sleep. It was a warm afternoon and she was tired out from walking.

All at once she opened her eyes, and there was Milly sitting beside her on the back seat, smiling. She said, "Hello, Milly," and then she suddenly thought of what had happened.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

“But, Milly, you’re supposed to be lost! And everybody’s out looking for you, policemen and everybody. What are you doing here?”

“Well, I guess I’m found, and you must have found me, Flora. But it would have been fun to have been found by a policeman, wouldn’t it?” And they both laughed.

Then Milly told her that she had been holding tight to Father’s hand, and all at once Father wasn’t there any more, and she couldn’t find him. She looked and looked for him, but there were so many strange people, and none of them looked like Father or Mother or Flora. And she kept on looking and looking, but still she couldn’t find them. Then she happened to meet Wally Cook, a grown-up friend of hers, and he bought her a dish of ice-cream. Then he asked her where her folks were and seemed surprised when she said she didn’t know. So he said it was a mighty good thing he happened to find her, and she mustn’t cry because he’d find her folks for her right away. So he picked her up and carried her, and walked through the crowds everywhere hunting Father and Mother. Then he got her an All Day Sucker, if she promised not to cry any more. Then all at once he saw Flora in the surrey, sleeping. And he knew she would be all right, so he left her there.

And so it was Flora who found her, after all! What a good thing Mother had not let her go out

The County Fair

to hunt! If she had not stayed in the surrey, Milly might never have recognized it and might have stayed lost and never been found.

Milly wanted to go and find Father and Mother at once, but Flora was older and wouldn't let her, because she remembered that Mother had said she must not move from the surrey. And she knew they would never be able to find them, and besides they might both get lost again and that would be dreadful.

So they just sat and talked until Mother came, looking terribly worried. How her face changed when she saw Milly sitting there safely beside Flora!

"So you found her, Flora. did you?" asked Mother.

"Well, not exactly, Mother; she was sitting here beside me when I woke up a few minutes ago. It was really Wally Cook, not me. He found her and hunted and hunted till he came to our surrey and left her here beside me. I was so surprised. . . ."

And then Father had to go and tell the policeman and all the people from Pleasantville that she was found and they needn't hunt any more. Father was so relieved that he bought Flora and Milly each a stick of Ice Cream Candy. Then he gave them each a nickel to spend for themselves. Milly spent hers for a ride on the Merry-go-round, and it made her feel sick afterwards. Trains and Merry-go-rounds

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

never did agree with Milly. Flora spent hers for a little red ball with a rubber cord attached, to bring it back to your hand when you bounce it. She wanted to have something to take home with her. Merry-go-round rides are over so soon.

By that time it was after four, and Mother had missed the Races. She knew the seats would all be taken, but she felt she must go and take a look over the fence, at least. When they got there, the crowd was thick all the way round. Father and Mother were tall and could look over people's heads, and Mother got terribly excited, especially on the home-stretch. Father lifted Flora up, but she was so heavy he had to put her down again very soon, so she didn't get to see much. Then he lifted Milly up to his shoulder, and that would have been a good perch for her, if she had liked it. But just as she looked up, a horse came rushing by close to the fence with staring eyes and steaming nostrils and Milly began to scream:

"It's going to run over us! It's going to run over us!"

She cried and cried, so Father put her down quickly. And then a big tall man, who was so excited he was throwing his hat up in the air stepped on her toe, and that made her cry louder than ever. Nobody heard her much because everybody was making so much noise. Finally Mother said, "We must take her out of this crowd," and Father picked

The County Fair

her up and carried her away in his arms, Mother and Flora squeezing through the crowd behind him.

It wasn't long after that until the family started for home. Father had Ben all hitched up and ready, and the Barkers were ready to start, too. But, of course, the boys were late. Five o'clock came, but the boys did not. Mother and the girls got packed into their seats, and Father began to get exasperated. And that did not help matters any. Mother kept saying, "They'll be here in a minute," but the minutes passed and they did not come. Mr. Barker got tired of waiting, too, and decided to go and look for them. Soon he came back with the four of them, Jerry and Ned, and Bill Barker and Phil. And the boys said they had been looking at the farm machinery and never dreamed it was time to go home.

At last they started. But they got into a terrible crowd, worse than the morning, because it was so late. So they just had to be content to keep their place in line. Flora and Milly both went to sleep and slept most of the way home. They didn't pay any attention to Ned, or listen to him shouting to Jerry and the Barker boys in their surrey close behind.

About a mile from home, a thunder storm came up. It had been hot and sultry all day, and they had been wishing for a little sprinkle to lay the dust. But they hadn't wished for a storm with high winds and thunder and lightning.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

The side curtains had been left at home. There was nothing to do but get wet. Father drove as fast as possible. Flora and Milly woke up, but they didn't get as wet as the others, because they were squeezed into the middle. Ella took off her hat, but the white satin ribbon got ruined anyhow, and she cried for a week about it. Ned caught a cold from getting his shirt so badly soaked, because he was so hot and refused to put on his coat, and Father was so busy driving Ben he couldn't insist upon it.

A thunder storm is bad enough when you're safe inside a house, looking out at it. But it's very much worse when you're out driving in a surrey without any side curtains. Especially when the whole family's along, and everybody is tired and cross, especially Father.

Somehow or other they got home at last, but all wet and dripping. And Father said that was the last time he would take the whole family to the Fair, and, after all, who could blame him?



CHAPTER III

TROUBLE



*Every one's cross,
Everything's wrong;
Looks just like rain
The whole day long.*

*Kitchen floor's muddy,
Kettle's boiled dry;
Doll's head's broken—
Oh, let it lie!*

*Nothing but scolding—
Wish I were dead;
Then they'd be sorry
For all that they said!*

TROUBLE



ONE day in summer there was a big funeral at the church. Father spent the whole morning in his study with the door closed tight. And Mother kept reminding the children to keep very quiet.

Father had to go out to the people's house in the country first, so dinner was early. Mother hurried with the dishes and then put on her Sunday dress and hat. As she went out the door, she told Flora to be sure and bring Ponto into the house, and to stir the apple-butter on the back of the stove, to keep it from sticking.

The people came early. Everybody in town seemed to be going. It must be somebody important. Flora and Milly watched from behind the plants at the parlor window. It's not polite to stand out in the front yard or along the street and stare, like some people do.

There was Mrs. Cozzens and Mr. and Mrs. Barker and the Smeezles,—*they* take their children!

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Think of that! And the Frosts and the Peebles and the Youngs and the Judsons and. . . Suddenly Flora remembered about Ponto, and she and Milly ran to the back door to call him.

But where was Ponto? Flora ran to the woodshed and Milly ran to the barn. No Ponto. Flora ran upstairs and Milly ran down cellar. No Ponto. They ran out in the yard and called again.

"I think I'll go down the back alley and look," said Flora. "He may have followed Ned over to the Barkers'."

"I'll go, too," said Milly. "Ned would never think of putting him inside for the funeral, so we'll have to find him."

But no Ponto was to be found in the alley. And the Barkers' house was all closed up. Nobody at home. Probably all gone to the funeral.

The church was about a block away from the Barkers'.

"Oh, look," exclaimed Milly. "There they come down the road. We can see best from the parlor window. The horses are walking. Let's hurry."

The bell started to toll dismally.

They flew. When they got to the woodshed, they heard a noise. When they reached the porch they knew what it was. But they couldn't tell which direction it was coming from.

Oh, what an awful noise! What a horrible, horrible howling! What would Mother say? Where

Trouble

was it coming from? Enough to spoil any funeral! Where is that Ponto? *Where is that bad dog?*

Milly ran to the barn and Flora ran around to the front yard. Still Ponto was nowhere to be seen. Thank goodness, he wasn't in the front yard, at least. The girls met at the back porch and hurried into the house. Kitchen, dining room, sitting room, parlor. Louder and louder the noise. More dismal and more doleful the howling.

There was Ponto, at last! Ponto, with his nose up in the air, torn lace curtain draped round his neck, and agonizing sounds pouring out of his throat. Right by the window that looked towards the church, and the window was open!

He had been in the house the whole time. The lace curtain was dragged across the parlor floor, and it had several large holes in it. Ponto had poked his head through a hole and pulled the whole thing down. The curtain rod had cracked the green jardiniere when it fell.

"Oh, Ponto, Ponto, what will Mother say?"

Just then Milly happened to look outside, and saw the procession arriving at the church.

"Let's lock Ponto up in the pantry, so we can watch. He'll be quiet as soon as the bell stops tolling."

No sooner said than done. And just in time to see the hearse and the pall-bearers and the flowers and the people dressed in black.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

“Another minute more and we would have missed it.”

“Why do they always wear such long black veils, I wonder?”

“It must be heavy. Look how the pall-bearers are bending over. When I die, I’d like to have about twenty, wouldn’t you?”

“I’m glad Ponto wasn’t outside, or Mother would have been sure to hear him all the way inside the church.”

“She probably heard him as it was, with that window wide open!”

“This seems an awfully dull funeral. Wish something exciting would happen. The horses haven’t even got plumes! Remember that time the hearse was all white, just like Cinderella’s coach?”

“Yes, but most funerals are black. I’ve noticed that. Dear me! I smell something. Don’t you? Somebody’s cooking something!”

“Why, no, I don’t. Oh, look how many mourners there are this time. That’s about the twentieth carriage. Why didn’t we start counting? There’s at least four people in each, and the last one had six. It must be somebody important. What do you s’pose they died of?”

“I *do* smell something. I’m sure of it!”

“Why are you always thinking about smelling things? Why don’t you look at the funeral?”

Trouble

"Something's burning. Oh, dear, I forgot. It must be the apple-butter. . . ."

Before she had finished the sentence, Flora was in the kitchen.

Yes, the apple-butter. That was what made the smell. It had boiled over the kettle and the top of the stove was covered with it. What a nuisance apple-butter is! What a nuisance anything is that has to be cooked all day long and stirred and stirred and stirred! Why do such things always burn on the bottom, and always boil over? The first minute your back is turned they start acting up. Much better not to have any old apple-butter. . . . Why should anything that tastes so good be so much trouble to make? 'Cause it *is* good. . . .

Flora managed to get hold of the handle of the kettle and pull it back farther to the cool part of the stove. Gradually the apple-butter went down to its proper level again. But the mess on the stove. . . .

"Oh, dear, what will Mother say? And why did I forget to stir it?" wailed Flora.

"There's nothing we can do about it, except let it alone. Let's go and look at the funeral again," suggested Milly.

But there was nothing to see. The people were all inside the church. The doors were closed. The church yard and the street were filled with horses

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

and buggies. The girls knew from experience that there was nothing to do but wait. Funerals are the longest things, never nice and short like weddings. There would be nothing to see till it was all over and the people came out again.

"We might as well put up the curtain."

Flora got the stepladder and Milly held it while she climbed up.

"Oh, look!" screamed Milly. "Look who's coming!"

She forgot all about curtain and ladder and rushed out of the room and down the front walk.

"What is it? What's the matter? Milly, tell me! Milly! Milly!"

But Milly was out of sight and out of hearing.

She shouldn't go out in the front yard when there's a funeral, thought Flora, as she climbed down from the ladder and examined Ponto's holes in the curtain. "Mother said we were to stay in the house. . . ."

She heard voices and glanced out the window. There was Grandma coming up the walk, and Milly was helping to carry her suit-case. No wonder Milly ran! What a wonderful surprise! How nice to have a visit from Grandma. How strange that Grandma should come when everything was going wrong. Grandma loved to straighten out troubles. Grandma would know what to do about that awful apple-butter. Grandma would know what to do

Trouble

about the holes in the curtain. Grandma always knew how to fix everything. No matter if it was holes in your stockings that needed darning, or dresses that needed mending, or dishes that needed washing . . . Grandma would set everything right. As soon as she took off her bonnet and found a chair, she found two big girls on her lap and the visit began.

Grandma was Mother's own Mother, but she was so small and Mother was so tall it was hard to believe it. Grandma spent a large part of her time with the Baxters, and when she was there, it made eight in the family. She never told anybody when she was coming. She just packed up her suitcase and got on the train, and then there she was, like a grand surprise. You never knew when she was coming until you saw her walking up the front walk, carrying her own suitcase.

She went upstairs to her room to unpack a few things, and then came down with needle and thread to mend Ponto's curtain. Then she went out to the kitchen to clean up the apple-butter mess, which had burned to a crisp by this time. She poured what was left of the apple-butter into a clean kettle that wasn't burned in the bottom, and put it on the back of the stove to simmer. Then she put on an apron and sat down to peel potatoes for supper.

The church bell began to toll again, and that reminded the girls of the funeral which they had en-

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

tirely forgotten. They ran to the parlor window and watched. The hearse was just starting slowly down the road, the horses walking. The people came out and climbed into the carriages, one after the other, and one after the other they drove off slowly. The girls counted them. There were twenty-five. The first ones had to stand and wait down the street for the others to catch up. And then it was all over. The procession wound its way slowly up the hill to the cemetery. A few people stood around in groups in front of the church and talked. Then they went home and the street was empty again.

Mother came home looking sad. She went into the bedroom to take off her hat and change her dress. Flora could tell that she had been crying. Why do people cry at funerals? Why do people go to funerals if it makes them cry? Poor Mother!

Flora put her arms around her neck and whispered:

"I've got a secret, and I won't tell!

"Three little niggers in a peanut shell!"

Mother's eyes brightened at once.

"What is it? Did you burn the apple-butter? Seems to me I smell something!"

"Just come and see!" exclaimed Flora, opening wide the kitchen door.

"Here's a surprise for you!" laughed Milly, leading her in.

Trouble

And there in a chair sat Grandma!

All at once a bark was heard, and everybody looked around to see where it came from. Then Flora remembered, and ran to unlatch the pantry door. Out jumped Ponto, the happiest dog in the world, barking wildly. And when Father came in, it was hard to tell who gave Grandma the heartiest welcome, Mother, Father or Ponto.

Grandma loved to sew. If she wasn't darning stockings or knitting mittens for somebody, she was piecing quilts. And that's how Flora got started. Grandma promised that this one should be Flora's very own. It was to be the Irish Chain Pattern. While the Fruit Basket Pattern is much prettier, it is too difficult to start on.

Flora helped to cut the pieces, with a little paper pattern for a guide. As soon as she had a pile of colored pieces and another pile of white pieces, she began to sew them together.

It was slow work. The needle was so big and clumsy and was always coming unthreaded. And the thread *would* get into knots, just to make things harder. But the size of the stitches was the worst of all. When they got too big they had to be ripped out and done over. Try as hard as she could, Flora couldn't make them small enough. The needle didn't slide in and out as easily as it did for Grandma. Perhaps another needle would be sharper . . . or the thread was too thick. No, it

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

must be the goods that was too thick. Something was wrong.

It seemed hopeless to think that there would ever be enough for a real bed. It would take years to piece enough blocks to fill that shoe-box. Why are shoe-boxes made so big? And would it ever be enough for a real bed even if the shoe-box was full and overflowing?

The pile did not really begin to grow until Mother and Grandma both began to help, and then it grew by leaps and bounds. Milly wanted to help, too, so Grandma gave her a pin with a thread tied on, and she pretended.

Mother got out her bag of scraps which contained left-overs from all the family's clothes for years and years past. There was Ella's flowered dimity, and Flora's sprigged percale, and Milly's pink and white calico. Various pieces from Mother's dressing-sacks and plenty of stripes from Father's shirts and the boys', and hundreds of others. Flora and Milly named them all over and mentioned where they came from, every time that Mother stretched the quilt out on the bed to see if it was big enough. And Grandma said Flora should keep it and show it to her grandchildren and tell them all about the old dresses.

When the quilt was nearly done and Mother was running out of scraps and wondering where she could find more to finish it, she ran across a little roll

Trouble

of green-and-brown plaid in the bottom of the pattern basket. Flora had hidden it there because she was afraid to throw it away, and yet she didn't like to see it lying around. The green-and-brown plaid brought back memories to Flora which she did not care to remember. But Mother happened to be going through her patterns and sorting out the oldest ones to throw away, and of course she found it.

"Well, how did this ever find its way in here, I wonder? How lucky I found it! It is just what we need to finish the quilt."

Flora was looking out of the window at the time, and pretended to be very much interested in watching Chris Ferguson go by on his dray, so she said nothing. Anyhow, Mother wasn't asking her, or she would have waited for an answer.

So that's how the green-and-brown plaid got into the quilt, and the quilt got spoiled for Flora. It was a beautiful quilt, but somehow, Flora never cared for it.

When the green-and-brown plaid dress was new, in the spring, Flora loved it. She had helped to choose the material from a counterful of gingham as high as her head at Sampson's Store in Banksville. Mother had let her pick out the pattern, too, and she wore it for the first time on the Last Day of School. Mamie Reed and Nelly Rogers kept telling her how pretty it was.

But after a certain event happened, she hated it.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

She hung it in the back of her closet under a lot of other things, so she wouldn't have to wear it. She felt that she never wanted to see it again as long as she lived.

And then Mother insisted upon putting some pieces of that plaid into the new quilt. Flora objected at first, but couldn't think of any reason to give, except that she didn't like the color. When Mother said, "Why, I always thought you liked green," and "You chose this yourself, you know, Flora," there didn't seem to be anything else to do about it. The plaid went into the quilt, and the quilt was spoiled for Flora. All the excitement of seeing it finished, and watching Mother and Grandma quilt it on the stretchers, was reduced to misery because around the edge there was a row of blocks of green-and-brown plaid.

When the quilt was ready for use, and put on the little white iron bed, everybody admired it but Flora. It was a good thing they all talked about how pretty it was, and what good work Flora had done, and how splendid that she could stick at a thing long enough to finish it, and not leave it and forget about it before it was half done like so many children. . . . It was a good thing that the others talked so much about it. They never noticed that Flora didn't say a word. They never noticed how close the tears were.

Whenever Flora made the bed, she turned the

pieced side under, and put the plain blue side up,—to keep that plaid out of sight and out of memory. Mother made a fuss about having the quilt upside down, and when *she* made the bed, the green-and-brown-plaid blocks came right out on top to stare poor Flora in the face. Flora couldn't explain to Mother why she put the blue side up, and it was hard to have her think she did it just out of carelessness.

The trouble with the green-and-brown plaid dress happened soon after school was out, a short time before Grandma came. She got up bright and early that morning and as soon as breakfast was over she helped Mother with the cleaning, picking up scrubbing brushes, and running to get the broom, and all the little things to save Mother steps. In the afternoon, when the house was looking spick-and-span and everything was done, she went upstairs to change her dress. She had special permission to put on the new green-and-brown-plaid gingham.

Milly put on a clean dress too, and then they took their dolls down to the lawn swing to play house. They were in the midst of a birthday party for two of their dolls,—Beauty and Priscilla,—when Mother called out of the window that she must have more coffee before supper. Milly was too small to go, and the boys were nowhere to be seen, so that meant that Flora had to go to the grocery. Milly promised not to let the dolls eat any of the Pretend

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Cake until Flora returned. So that's why Flora ran.

When she got to the store she had to wait for half a dozen other customers to be waited on first. She knew from experience that there was no use trying to get Mr. Parker's attention until after all the grown-ups were waited on.

While this was going on, Flora watched Miss Howard in the next room, arranging her hats and waiting for customers. She put first one hat in the window and then another, then she would take them out and put others in, then go out on the sidewalk and squint her eyes to see how they looked, then come back in and start all over again. After that, she spent a long time dusting the tables off and polishing the mirrors. Then she went back to the show window again and seemed to have a hard time making up her mind. She took the hats out again, and put others in, and kept on taking them out and putting them in. She looked in at Flora once, in a sort of unfriendly way, as if she thought that Flora had no business to be watching her.

Miss Howard's Millinery Shop was in the same building as Mr. Parker's store. There was a wide open door which separated the two. It was arranged in this handy way so that people could buy hats and groceries and chicken feed all in the same store. Mr. Parker owned the whole building and rented half to Miss Howard.



Flora watched Mrs. Steeley's baby for a while and wished it would wake up.

Flora did not like Miss Howard, because she had such staring eyes and always frightened her. She had a sudden way of speaking, and a very sharp voice. Flora could never think of an answer quick enough, and when Miss Howard asked her the second time, she got more frightened than ever. So, when Miss Howard turned and looked at her, standing in the grocery, waiting, Flora turned her back quickly, and tried to pretend she hadn't been looking. She was relieved that Miss Howard did not call to her.

Mr. Parker was wrapping up some bundles for Mrs. Steeley. Flora watched Mrs. Steeley's baby for a while, sleeping peacefully in its carriage, and wished it would wake up. After what seemed to Flora a long time, Mr. Parker waited on her at last, handed her the pound of coffee, and she said, "Charge it, please!" very hurriedly and started to go out the door.

She never knew how it happened. She hadn't even seen the basket of nuts before. She had been so busy watching Miss Howard and thinking about her hats, that she hadn't paid any attention to the candy in the case, or anything else in the grocery, as she so often did. But when she rushed out through the door, she stooped down and **TOOK A NUT!**

The bushel basket was standing beside the door, and there were other baskets and boxes near by, with various things in them, oranges, lemons, po-

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

tatoes. She never saw them at all. Her eyes lighted on the nuts and she took one.

Just as she took it, Miss Howard from the other room raised up her arm and called, "Here! Here! What are you doing?"

And Flora RAN!

She suddenly thought of Milly waiting in the swing, and Beauty and Priscilla waiting patiently for a bite of birthday cake, and she took the shortcut down the alley, and ran as hard as she could go. About half way home, she suddenly looked and saw THAT NUT in her hand. She took it and threw it over a high board fence into the Krapps' chicken yard. And she prayed that the chickens would eat it up, *quick!*

When she got home, she was all out of breath, and Mother scolded her for running so fast on such a hot day.

Somehow, the dolls' birthday party was not as gay as it should have been.

It was several days afterwards, on a Monday evening, that the family sat out on the porch for a little while, but the mosquitoes got so bad that they couldn't stand it. So they went inside and all sat around the sitting room table. They closed the door to keep the mosquitoes out. Milly asked Mother if she might take her hair down and comb it, and Mother said yes, she might. So Mother went on reading, and Milly took down Mother's hair, and

Trouble

fixed it up in all kinds of fancy shapes,—curls, top-knots, loop, braids, puffs. How queer it made Mother look, sometimes like a little girl, sometimes like an old, old lady, sometimes very stylish, sometimes very plain. Once in a while Mother said “Ouch!” but not often. Mother said she loved the feel of it. The best part of it all was to see how nice Mother looked afterwards when she combed it the old way again.

Just when Mother was looking most elegant, footsteps were heard coming up the walk and that meant callers. Mother grabbed comb and brush and flew to comb her hair, and Milly fell off her chair in the rush. When the knock came at the door, and Father went to open it, who should it be but Miss Howard and, with her, Miss Heckle.

Miss Heckle was an old maid. She said so, herself. And said she wouldn’t be anything else for the world. She gave piano-lessons at home on weekdays, and played the organ in church on Sundays. She was also Flora’s Sunday-School teacher.

Father said, “Won’t you be seated?” and then began to talk about the weather. It happened that Miss Heckle took Mother’s rocker and Miss Howard took a small chair right next to Flora. Flora was making Beauty a dress, and had just finished the flowing sleeves, and was trying to sew them in the way Mother had taught her.

Miss Howard said, “Good evening, Flora! How

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

are you this evening?" and nearly looked a hole through her. Flora gulped, but couldn't say a word.

Miss Howard kept on looking, and Flora felt sure that Father would soon be saying, "Can't you speak, Flora, when you are spoken to?" or Ned might volunteer, "Cat's got her tongue!" so, at last, she managed to murmur, "Very well, thank you!"

She could not bear to raise her eyes. She kept them on her sewing. Her hands shook so, the thread came out of the needle, and the scissors fell to the floor with a bang. She had to give up trying to fit the sleeves and let everything,—doll, dress, thread, needle and everything fall in a heap on the floor. She was afraid to look up, so she kept her eyes fixed on her lap. And her lap was covered with green-and-brown plaid.

In a moment or two, Mother came in with her hair combed, and a fresh white waist on. Flora nearly sank through the floor, for she felt sure that Miss Howard was only waiting for Mother, before beginning her story. But to her surprise, the conversation kept to choir anthems and potato bugs and the weather.

Green-and-brown plaid. When are they going? Didn't want that nut at all. Green-and-brown plaid. Never liked Miss Howard. When will they go? Why don't they go quick? *Quick!* Green-and-brown. . . . Green was such a nice color, but I don't like it any more. I must tell Milly I'm going

Trouble

to take blue. . . . Never did like Miss Howard. Wanted to get . . . Beauty's dress . . . done. . . . Are . . . they . . . going to stay . . . all . . . night. . . . I . . . wish. . . .

Suddenly Father pulled out his watch and said, "It's time all little girls were in bed, isn't it?"

Even when they got up to kiss Mother good night, nothing happened.

They had to say "Good night!" to Miss Howard and Miss Heckle, too, and, *even then*, nothing happened. Only Miss Howard stared harder than ever at poor Flora, and she could hardly walk out of the room, her knees trembled so. Flora never did like her.

She undressed so slowly that Milly thought she must have the stomach-ache.

She told her she thought maybe she did.

She couldn't sleep. She felt she had to speak to Mother. She said her prayers with Milly, and waited till Milly went to sleep. Then she crept out of bed and down the stairs, to see if the visitors had gone. She wanted Mother. She went so quietly that no one heard her. Perhaps they were all gone, and Father had gone to bed, and Mother would be sitting up alone, reading. . . .

No! They had not gone. When she got to the sitting room door, she heard voices. She listened. It was Miss Heckle, and she said, "Why didn't you tell me before yesterday? Then I would have asked

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

her to confess in Sunday School!" And then she laughed.

It was on a Monday evening.

They all laughed but Mother, and Miss Howard's laugh was the loudest. It was hard and cruel, just like her stare. Flora never did like her.

She crept through the black hall, and up the winding stairs, and crawled into bed. She cried herself to sleep, for she knew now that Father and Mother knew that she was A THIEF!

But from that day to this, neither Father nor Mother said one word to her about it, so perhaps they understood.



CHAPTER IV

TRIP TO MICHIGAN



*To take a walk
Is very slow;
Your legs get tired
Where'er you go.*

*To take a drive
Is very fast,
As many miles
As horse can last.*

*To take a train
Is faster still;
Does not get tired,
And runs up hill.*

Chapter IV

TRIP TO MICHIGAN



WHEN Flora was eight, she took a trip. She went to Michigan with Father and Milly. She was not in the habit of taking trips. In fact, she had never taken a real trip in her life. She had never been very far

away from Pleasantville. So she felt very important. She had not studied Geography yet, so she had not the slightest idea where Michigan was. She felt that it must be on the other side of the world, at least. It was the place where Grandmother and Grandfather lived, the place where Father used to live when he was a little boy, and the place where Uncle Phil and all the cousins lived.

Mother worked for days to get the girls ready. New dresses, new shoes, new hair ribbons, a new coat for Flora, but not for Milly, as she had to wear Flora's old one that was too small. But her silk dress was new, while Flora's was an old one of Ella's made over. Large families get used to hand-me-downs and made-overs.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

And, of course, new hats. Mother usually bought the family hats at Banksville. It wasn't safe to buy one at Pleasantville, because some one else was sure to have one just like it. But this time, Father decided very suddenly to take the trip, and there wasn't time to drive to Banksville, because Mother had to spend all her time sewing. So they had to go to Miss Howard's, after all.

Flora had never spoken to Miss Howard in the months that followed the Nut Incident. And Miss Howard had never spoken to her. She acted as if she had forgotten all about it, but Flora knew she would never forget till her dying day. Supposing Miss Howard should say something. . . . Flora managed to get Ned or Milly to take her place if she was asked to go to the grocery on an errand. She never went near Miss Howard if she could help it. She crossed the street or turned up an alley, if she saw her coming in time. She dreaded meeting her.

When Mother said they must go to Miss Howard's for the hats, Flora was upset. She felt that she would rather stay at home, and give up the trip a hundred times,—anything, rather than face Miss Howard. She worried about it all morning, and kept suggesting to Mother that her old summer hat would do. But Mother said no, it would be much colder in Michigan because it was so much farther north, and she couldn't possibly go without a

Trip to Michigan

winter hat. What would Grandmother and Aunt Emma think of her if she wore a summer hat in October?

So they went.

And Miss Howard acted just as friendly as could be,—just as if she were a real friend of Flora's. She patted her on the back and tickled her under the chin and said something to Mother about her lovely blue eyes. Flora hated to be patted on the back. She hated to be tickled under the chin, and she hated to have people make remarks about her eyes. And, besides, *she knew that Miss Howard was thinking all the time about that nut!*

The hats were beautiful. They were of grayish-tan felt, rather fuzzy felt, with small, high crowns and wide brims. They were trimmed in cream-colored, changeable satin ribbon. They were just alike, except that the ribbon was arranged in a slightly different way on Milly's. They had elastic bands under the chin.

Mother and Ella and Jerry and Ned came to the depot to see the travelers off. Flora had never gone away from Mother before, and she got an empty feeling in her stomach and couldn't keep from crying. But Mother said there was nothing to cry about, and besides look how brave Milly was.

The train came roaring and rushing like lightning down towards the little depot, as if it meant to swallow it up, people and all in one huge bite! Two lit-

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

the girls held onto Mother's hand, tight. The engine went on past, the coaches slowed down gradually, jerked once or twice, something let off steam somewhere with a sizzle, and, before they knew it, Flora and Milly were being lifted high up the steps and onto the rear platform of the train. They had hardly had time to feel the kisses and hugs. And then everybody was calling, "Good-by, good-by," and Father was hustling them into a seat.

The train stopped for only a few minutes, so they had to hurry. Father opened the car window quickly, and the last thing they heard was, "Give my love to Grandmother," and "Take off your coats if it's hot in the train," and "Don't forget to wear your rubbers if it rains," and other things like that. And the last thing they saw was Ned turning flip-flops and acting silly to make them laugh, and Jerry running along the platform trying to keep up with the train, while Mother and Ella stood and waved their handkerchiefs, and then turned around and started for home.

It was not nearly as exciting as the time the family moved from Smithfield. The girls were older by this time and, besides, had had a trip to Banksville by train once, and another to Mercer. It is true they were only short trips, not to be compared with Michigan, Banksville being only eight miles and Mercer twelve. But they were better than nothing, and the girls felt that they knew all that was to be

Trip to Michigan

known about a train. Flora didn't feel sick one bit, but Milly did a little. Poor Milly! Trains never did agree with her. Father pulled out a lot of papers and things to study, and Flora and Milly had to be quiet, so as not to disturb him. Each time the train stopped, they wished for an exciting baby to get on, like the time when they moved from Smithfield.

But no babies got on. Not even any children. Several ladies and an old man, and a few married people, but nothing exciting. There was nothing for Flora and Milly to do, but look out of the window and count the horses and cows they passed, and pick out which houses they liked best. It seemed a long time till they finally got to Toledo. Toledo was the place where they were to change cars. The next train didn't come for a long time, so they went into a real restaurant and got something to eat. That was exciting enough for anybody, especially for Milly, who dropped her fork on the floor. The waiter had to come and bring her a clean one, while all the people at the other tables watched.

Then they went for a walk along the docks, and saw some boats. Great, enormous ones, all painted white, with windows and doors, and curtains at the windows. Flora never knew that boats were like that. Funny—boats with houses on them!

Flora asked Father what river it was.

And Father said, "The Maumee."

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

And Flora said, "Oh, no, Father, you're joking! I don't believe it!"

And Milly said, "Don't be funny, Father!"

But Father insisted that it was, so they believed him.

Father thought that it was a good joke that Flora wouldn't let a good old river like the Maumee have its name. And he never got tired of talking about it to everybody he met.

But there was no joke to it, from Flora's point of view. She had never studied Geography. How could she know that anywhere in the world there was a river with such a funny name? She had never heard the word, "Maumee," before. And when Father said, "Maumee," she thought he was making it up, just to make her and Milly laugh. Father was always playing jokes on the girls and saying funny things to make them laugh. It sounded just like a made-up name, not like a real one.

Father wrote to Mother that the Maumee river was not good enough for Flora. And he told Grandfather and Grandmother about it the very first day. And they all laughed. Flora and Milly looked at each other, and wondered what was so funny. Whenever Flora tried to explain, Father always started laughing, and wouldn't let her finish. Little harmless incidents sometimes turn into awful stories that cling to a person forever. This one clung to Flora. Afterwards, Flora understood what

Trip to Michigan

Mother meant when she said that Father's jokes were all right and usually funny, but sometimes they went too far.

The story of the Maumee became so enlarged and magnified by all the undue attention that was paid to it, that it completely colored Flora's impression of her visit to Toledo. She was never able to remember anything else about Toledo but the Maumee river.

After another long train ride, they got to Stonewall. Grandfather and Uncle Phil met them at the station, and they drove home in Uncle Phil's surrey. Grandfather had white whiskers on each side of his face, but none across the bottom. It made him look so funny that Flora and Milly both laughed the minute they saw him. Grandmother was waiting for them at the front door, and they almost jumped over the front gate, without opening it, in their eagerness to reach her. But she seemed even happier to see Father. Flora never forgot how the tears rolled down her cheeks as she patted him on the back. A little while after, two little girls fell asleep at the table, and had to be carried to bed, before they had finished their supper.

Uncle Phil lived in the country just outside Stonewall, and had a whole houseful of cousins, and best of all, there were two babies who were twins! Flora and Milly had not counted on such good luck as that. Anybody might have one baby, but it isn't

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

... body who can have two, exactly alike, and one a boy and one a girl. They could not imagine more perfect bliss. The girl baby had more hair than the boy baby, and that was the only way to tell them apart. Flora and Milly thought that Uncle Phil and Aunt Emma were the luckiest people in the whole world.

The queer thing was that the older cousins were not the least bit excited about having twins for brother and sister. They were not interested in the twins at all. No doubt they were used to them already. Whenever Carrie was asked to wheel them one at a time in the buggy or rock them to sleep, she made a dreadful fuss. So she and Ralph and the others were delighted to have Flora and Milly come to relieve them of some of the care of the babies.

Flora liked the boy baby best, and Milly liked the girl baby. The very first time they saw them, Aunt Emma let them sit on the sofa and hold them in their laps. The long embroidered dresses reached to the floor at their feet, and the boy baby liked to take hold of Flora's finger and hold it, oh, so tight!

By watching Aunt Emma, the girls learned all about how to take care of real babies. How to wash them and dress them and give them baths and put them to bed and sew for them. Now at last, their dolls would have the proper care. How badly they had been mistreated and neglected through ignorance!



Flora held one and
Milly held the other.

Trip to Michigan

A few days after the girls' arrival, the twins got sick. It was on a Sunday afternoon, and they were all out at Uncle Phil's, even Grandfather and Grandmother. Father brought his camera along, and took pictures of everything and everybody.

Aunt Emma promised that as soon as the twins woke up from their naps, Flora and Milly might have their pictures taken, holding them. This one had to be taken indoors, as it was too cool for the babies outside. Uncle Phil moved the parlor sofa over by the window for the girls to sit on. Flora held one and Milly held the other. They were very good and smiled at the birdie. Ralph made the girls laugh by peeping around the door and whispering in a loud whisper, "Watch out! Don't drop it! It'll break!" And Uncle Phil had to send him out to the barn, so he wouldn't spoil the picture.

Just after Father pressed the bulb, Milly's baby began to cry. Aunt Emma came and took it, but still it cried.

"Wind on the stomach," said Grandmother, taking Flora's baby away from her for fear it would get it, too. "I told Emma not to take them to church this morning."

The baby cried and cried. And the other one got it, too, for it began to cry. So they were both crying. Carrie said that was the chief trouble with twins. What one did, the other had to do, too, because they were twins. Nothing original about twins.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Ralph and Carrie started a game of croquet on the lawn, and everybody began to play. But those babies kept on crying.

Uncle Phil had always boasted about how good they were, and how they never cried at all, but he was not able to say that any more. For they cried enough that Sunday to make up for all the days of their short lives that they had been so good. Aunt Emma and Grandmother worked with them all afternoon, but they didn't stop. That croquet game didn't amount to much. Carrie got supper and they ate it silently, listening to the cries of those twins, and wondering when they would ever stop. It was the first time that Flora and Milly had ever heard how much noise two babies can make when they both cry at once and keep on crying. It made them miserable. They were sure the twins were dying, and when they asked Father if they were, he said, "Oh, dear, no, that's nothing but colic!"

After supper, Uncle Phil went upstairs where Aunt Emma and Grandmother were. But he did not know any more about what to do than they did. When Father and the girls went back to town to Grandmother's, he was still there, and the noise was still coming from behind that closed bedroom door.

They did not go out to Uncle Phil's again for several days, but when they saw him the next time, all he said was, "Oh, we fixed 'em up all right. They're just as good as ever, now!"

Trip to Michigan

One more exciting thing happened before they left for home. Grandmother's cellar stairs were very steep. City people have steps going down to the cellar from the inside of the house, and do not have an outside cellar door at all. It may be handier for going down cellar, but what is life without a good old sloping cellar door? Grandmother did not take ice like the other city people, because she said she was too old-fashioned. She kept her butter and milk in a screened-in cupboard in the cellar, just as Mother did at home. And that meant that she had to go up and down the cellar stairs many times a day. When Flora and Milly first came, Grandmother said they could help her most by running up and down cellar for her. They took turns doing it.

One afternoon when Uncle Phil brought the girls in from the farm where they had been spending the day, they came in the side door of Grandmother's house, but she wasn't there. The potatoes were peeled and lying in water in the yellow crock. There was a good fire, and the skillet was sitting in the warming oven. They called and called. Flora ran upstairs to look, while Milly ran to the neighbors. Grandmother sometimes went over to borrow a cup of coffee or a pinch of salt or something. But no, she wasn't there, and she wasn't upstairs. Flora even looked under the beds and in the closets to be sure. Father was away with Grandfather, so there

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

was only Uncle Phil to take the responsibility. They hunted everywhere. Then they decided to sit down in the kitchen and wait. Uncle Phil said she might have gone down the street to the grocery, and would probably be back soon. He did not want to go home and leave the girls there until she came.

So they sat down and talked. Uncle Phil asked them if they liked to go to school, and how old they were, and what they were going to do when they got big. Flora answered most of the questions, but couldn't think of any to ask Uncle Phil in return. Milly ran out to the gate several times, then settled in Grandmother's rocker and kept her eyes on the street up to the corner, so she could be the first one to see Grandmother when she came.

After a while the conversation lagged, for Uncle Phil ran out of questions. It was while they were sitting so quietly, that they heard a faint noise. Uncle Phil jumped up and exclaimed, "What was that?" They listened, and heard it again, so faint they could not make it out. Suddenly Uncle Phil noticed that the cellar door was standing slightly open. That gave him the idea. He ran to it, opened it wide, and rushed down madly.

"Oh . . . if she's fallen down cellar. . . ."

In a moment he was at the bottom, while Flora and Milly stood terror-stricken at the door and peered down.

Trip to Michigan

But Grandmother was not there. She had not fallen down the cellar steps. It must have been the cat that made the noise. He must have been having a nap. He followed Uncle Phil up the steps into the kitchen, stretched himself, yawned, ambled over to the back door and meowed to be let out. He must have been having dreams.

But where was Grandmother?

Uncle Phil sat down in the rocker by the window and mopped his forehead. Flora and Milly stood around and wondered what he would do next. If only Father would come . . . or if only Mother could be here in Michigan . . . *she* could find Grandmother right away. Flora put her arm around Milly. Finally, Uncle Phil said, "Why don't you sit down?" So they sat down.

The clock ticked very loud, and seemed to be striking much more often than it should. And what a loud ticking it had! It got louder and louder. Even Milly noticed it, and asked Flora in a whisper, "What makes the clock tick so loud?" Four o'clock and then half-past four. Uncle Phil jumped up and went upstairs and wandered around, and then came down and took his seat again. Five o'clock. No Grandmother. Where *is* Grandmother? How could she get lost from her very own house? Now, in a crowd, it's easy, if you are little like Milly. . . . Grown-ups don't get lost, not even in books. Half-past five. . . . Suddenly, footsteps coming up the

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

brick walk . . . several people . . . and voices. Somebody opening the door . . . without knocking . . . men's voices. But no Grandmother!

Father! Father at last! And Grandfather! Oh, where can Grandmother be? *Find Grandmother for us, quick! Oh, find her!*

Father and Grandfather and Uncle Phil all made a dash for the front gate. Flora and Milly followed. We can't be left behind! We must go, too! We must go, too!

They all stopped suddenly and looked in the same direction. For right down the street, half-a-block away, a street car stopped, and off stepped—Grandmother! Grandmother, all dressed up in her best bonnet and cape, like Sundays! And this was only Thursday! Grandmother, at six o'clock, one-half hour past supper time, coming home to get supper! With only the potatoes peeled! And all dressed up in her Sunday clothes! And smiling!

"Hello, everybody, hello! Isn't it nice to be met like this at the gate?"

Her voice was happy and gentle, with a chuckle in it, and it never sounded so agreeable. Then she noticed the surprise and consternation on the faces of her audience, and hastened to explain.

"You see, I made a mistake by thinking this was only the First Thursday and not the Second Thursday. The first thing when I got up this morning, I said to myself, it's the First Thursday. I've never

Trip to Michigan

made a mistake about the Second Thursday in my life, and I've never missed a meeting. So when I went down cellar to bring up the lard, I happened to notice that I was out of eggs, and suddenly, the thought just jumped into my mind like a flash. "It's the Second Thursday, after all, and it's half-past three, and you'll miss it altogether, if you don't run. . . ."

All this about Thursdays and Firsts and Seconds and Lard and Eggs. . . . What did it mean? Was Grandmother. . . . But Uncle Phil seemed to understand, so he helped explain. It was the Ladies' Aid that was in the habit of meeting on the Second Thursday of each month in the church. The Ladies' Aid was something like the Sewing Circle at Pleasantville, only the ladies didn't sew. And Grandmother had not missed a meeting in twenty years, and it was funny she should suddenly forget. She wouldn't miss Ladies' Aid for the world, so the minute she thought of it, she flew to dress, and off she rushed! She must have left the house about five minutes before Uncle Phil and the girls arrived. And what a lucky thing she had started supper early!

It took a lot of explaining and Grandmother was so sorry she had forgotten at the last minute to write the note she had intended to leave on the kitchen table for Uncle Phil. . . . Yes, she had remembered that they were coming. . . .

And Uncle Phil shook his finger at her and told

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

her he'd have to spank her if she didn't behave herself better. And Grandmother promised never to forget the Second Thursday again, and cause so much trouble and worry.

The next day, Uncle Phil and a strange man drove up in front of Grandmother's house, with a big box in the back part of the wagon. Uncle Phil called hello, and was anybody home, or had they all gone off to meetings? Grandmother forgot to scold him for teasing, in her excitement over the box. She and the girls were very curious to know what was in it, but Uncle Phil wouldn't tell. Father looked very mysterious, too, and kept saying "Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies!" So the only thing they could do was stop coaxing and wait till it was unpacked.

Grandmother was the first to say, "Oh, I know!"

Flora and Milly couldn't say it, because they didn't know. They had never seen anything like it before.

"I think it's a . . . a—a sewing-machine!" guessed Milly.

"Oh, dear, no! Sewing-machines have got more shape! I think it's a . . . a book-case!" ventured Flora. But it wasn't either.

When all the wrappings were taken off, and the fat, thick door was opened up, and they saw the tin shelves inside, they looked at Uncle Phil in wonder, and said, "What's it for?"

Trip to Michigan

And then Uncle Phil explained that it was a *refrigerator*, or, as most people call it,—an *ice-box*. Which is something to keep ice in, to keep your food nice and cold, so you don't have to take your food down cellar in warm weather. And city people use it in the winter too, so they don't ever need to go down cellar. And then he showed the girls where the food belonged, and where the ice went in, and where the pan went, underneath, to catch the water. And Grandmother was to keep it right in the kitchen, but not too near the stove! And there was a card that said ICE, for the iceman to see. It must be hung up in the window with *that* number up, if you want *that* much ice. And don't forget to empty the pan underneath!

Poor Uncle Phil had had such a fright when Grandmother was lost and he heard that noise in the cellar. He said the vision of Grandmother lying at the foot of those cellar stairs would always be in his mind, if he didn't get her an ice-box. Then he locked the cellar door, and said to Grandmother, "Now, don't you ever go down those steps again!" and Grandmother said she wouldn't.

Soon after that, letters began to come from Mother and Ella and the boys, to know when Father was coming home. The days slipped by faster and faster. All at once, the last day of all came, and Flora and Milly had to say good-by to Grandmother.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

All the cousins came to the station to see them off, all except the twins, of course, who were not big enough to go anywhere. Aunt Emma gave the girls a large bag full of scraps for doll clothes, as a parting gift. That reconciled them a little for having to leave the twins behind. At last they were on the train, and all the cousins shouted good-by, and they waved and waved as long as they could see each other.

The trip home did not seem very important, somehow. Except the end of it, and seeing Mother and Ella and Jerry and Ned again, and especially Mother.

The first thing Milly said was, "Oh, Mother, won't you please get us some twin babies as soon as possible, just like Aunt Emma's?"

Flora chimed in, "Oh, yes, Mother, please . . ." then she hesitated a moment. She had not forgotten that closed bedroom door nor the noises that came through it on that awful Sunday afternoon. She realized as never before what a big responsibility it is to have even one baby, and how much bigger a responsibility it is to have two.

So she said firmly, "No, Mother, one will be enough!"

And then they were home again. And even the house looked different. It had the look of a stranger's house, and made Flora feel queer. But

Trip to Michigan

after she had a good night's sleep in the little white iron bed, and woke up in the morning, it looked just like Home!



CHAPTER V

THE SEWING CIRCLE



*Ladies may be fat,
Ladies may be tall;
Ladies may be this or that,
It matters not at all.*

*Ladies like to knit,
Ladies like to sew;
Ladies like to talk and laugh,
Wherever they may go.*

*Ladies like to eat
Lunch upon their laps;
Ladies like to say good-by,
When they've put on their wraps.*

THE SEWING CIRCLE



OTHER belonged to the Sewing Circle. So did all the other ladies of the church. The Sewing Circle met once a month at the different ladies' houses, one after the other, taking turns. As a rule, Flora and Milly

did not care much for meetings. They had been brought up on meetings. All kinds of meetings were held at the Baxters' house,—Teachers' Meetings, Vestry Meetings, Deacons' Meetings, Committee Meetings. They usually meant just keeping still.

But the Sewing Circle was different. The girls were glad when Mother's turn came for the Sewing Circle. Especially when they were piecing quilts, and left piles of scraps behind. No greater bliss can come to one whose chief interest in life is scraps. Mother often remarked that the quilt-scrap age was something like measles,—to be lived through, somehow, by the others,—whatever that meant.

The Sewing Circle was quite enjoyable because

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

they did so many nice things and were always trying to think up more nice things to do. If it was raising money to buy a new carpet for the church, it meant strawberry socials or chicken suppers or a picnic in the woods. If it was missionary boxes, it meant a lawn fête or a box-supper or a donation party. If it was quilts, it meant scraps. Whatever it was they were planning, there was always something exciting attached. Even the regular business meetings had ice-cream and cake!

Then there was another thing,—the children were allowed, and the babies. Which couldn't be said of most Meetings. Many of the ladies had no one to leave the children with at home, so they brought them along and made a real family party of it. That's why Flora and Milly got to go so often. Of course, when it came on school days they couldn't, but during the summer vacation they always went.

All sorts of exciting things seemed to happen when the Sewing Circle met. Some child got stung by a wasp or ran a splinter in its finger. Sometimes one baby would get the colic, and sometimes two or three. There was always plenty of advice close at hand, so it was hardly ever necessary to call a doctor. One time the little Smeezles brought the whooping cough along and gave it to everybody.

Mrs. Baxter was Secretary. Mother went by her proper name at Sewing Circle. Mrs. Baxter was

The Sewing Circle

Secretary, and always read the Minutes of the Previous Meeting. She seemed like a strange lady, when she stood up in front,—not like Flora's own Mother at all. Her voice was so solemn and dignified, and she looked ever so much prettier than all the other ladies. She always ended up, "Marietta Baxter, Sec." Although she said "Secretary," Flora knew it was really "Sec." for she had seen it in the book many times.

The most exciting Meeting ever held in the Baxter house was one Saturday afternoon in September when Flora was not quite eight. Two things happened which she never forgot.

It was the week after Father and Mother got back from the Buffalo Exposition. Every few years, Father and Mother went away for a trip. And left all the children behind. They said it was nice to pretend sometimes that they didn't have any children at all, just themselves. But Mother said it was hard work, because she always felt as if she had lost something. They went to the World's Fair at Chicago,—that was before Flora's time,—and to the Mardi Gras at New Orleans, and to other exciting places.

In August of the year Flora was eight, they decided to go to the Buffalo Exposition with some old Smithfield friends. Grandma couldn't come to stay with the children, as she usually did, because some of Uncle Fred's children were sick, and she was there, taking care of them. Father and Mother had

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

a hard time deciding what to do. Finally they thought of the idea of asking Miss Heckle to come and stay.

Miss Heckle was a good Sunday-School teacher. Flora had often heard Father say so. And Father knew. But Flora never felt comfortable in her presence after the Nut Incident. She dreaded every Sunday morning. She dreaded every question, and there were usually a good many because Flora was the best one in the class. She got through the Sundays, somehow, and after each was over, wished that the next would never come. And now Miss Heckle was coming to stay in the house. . . . And Mother would be away for a long time.

Flora begged Mother not to ask her to come. She didn't like the idea of having her sit down to the table with the family three times a day. The boys didn't like the idea either, because they knew she'd be cross. All the children made objections, until Father told them it was settled, and Miss Heckle was to come. And then there was no more use objecting.

Father and Mother got off at last and they sent the children souvenir post-cards of Niagara Falls and the Exposition. And Miss Heckle turned out to be a very good cook, and left the children pretty much alone after they got their work done each day. The boys had to look after the horse and the chickens, and the girls had to help with the house-

The Sewing Circle

work. So it wasn't as bad as they had anticipated. *She never said a word to Flora about the nut!* She even bought them ice-cream for Sunday dinner, and after that, the children almost liked her. But nobody could have been happier than those five children were on the day that Father and Mother returned,—and Miss Heckle went home again.

And then for days they heard all about the trip, and later, when Father had developed and printed all his pictures, they had to hear the story all over again. The chief impression they got from the photographs was that the Exposition was a Sea of Electric Lights at Night.

It was the week after they got home, that the Sewing Circle met at the Baxters' house.

Joe Beck, the janitor of the church, brought all the folding chairs over, and Ella picked the sweet-peas and put them in vases on the tables and mantel-pieces. Mrs. Pearson came early, and brought the three pounds of butter which she brought regularly every week. She took off her things and set right to work in the kitchen, to help Mother with the lunch. Everything was done but the finishing touches. The ice-cream couldn't be dished yet, of course, but the freezers were all ready on the back porch, in a handy place by the door.

Flora and Milly answered the door each time the bell rang, and took the ladies into the downstairs bedroom to take off their hats. Only, some of them

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

didn't wear any. After Hazel Higgins came, she helped, too. Hazel was Milly's best friend, and wore long black curls hanging down her back.

By half-past two, they were all there, and the program began. The President, Mrs. Lon Shafer, stepped up to the parlor table, and called the Meeting to order. The first thing on the program was a solo by Miss Hattie Zimmerman. A program wasn't a program in the Sewing Circle without a solo by Miss Hattie Zimmerman,—excepting when she lost her voice, of course, and then they just had to get along without her, and all the ladies said how they missed her. Miss Heckle took her place at the parlor-organ, and Miss Hattie stood up beside her and cleared her throat. How would her voice be to-day? Do you think she is a little hoarse? The conversation died down to a buzz, and then to nothing. The ladies all turned their heads in one direction, and listened expectantly. The first note of the organ sounded, and Miss Hattie began on the first verse. Everybody was thinking how fine her voice was, when suddenly, Willie Smeezle crawled out from under the easel that held Father's life-size Crayon Portrait. He lifted up his head with a seraphic smile to see what was going on. The eyes of the ladies turned with one accord upon Willie, and Mrs. Smeezle held her breath. He crawled out a little farther, and his leg got mixed up with one of the legs of the easel, and easel, portrait, and all, fell

The Sewing Circle

over on the floor with a loud bang! Poor Miss Hattie! What a shame! Pick it up, somebody! Not even cracked!

Mrs. Smeezle took Willie out to the woodshed, where she probably spanked him, judging from the noises that were heard coming through the cracks. Miss Hattie began again, bravely. The other numbers of the program followed. The ladies leaned back in their chairs and rocked contentedly. Mother read the Minutes, followed by the Roll Call. Suddenly she heard Ned calling outside.

She stopped short. She knew at once that something was the matter. She said she could always tell by the tone of voice. Then Ned came rushing right into the middle of the room with his hair flying and looking as white as a sheet.

"Jerry's got cut on the sickle, Mother! Come quick!"

Somebody said in a shocked voice, "What next!"

Mother dropped her Book of Minutes and ran. Flora was right behind her, and Milly was right behind her, and then Miss Heckle and a lot of the ladies. They followed Ned to the alley at the side of the house, and there was Jerry lying flat, with the blood streaming all over his leg. He was barefooted. Flora thought he was dead. Somebody ran for a doctor, and somebody ran for a pan of water, and somebody picked him up and carried him in to the sofa. But Flora couldn't do a thing. She

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

stood still and watched with unseeing eyes. Her mind stopped working. There was only one thought in it. Jerry must be dead.

In a few minutes, the doctor came and chased everybody out of the room. And it took *six stitches* to sew up the cut!

Ned told all about it that evening, after the ladies had all gone home, and after the doctor and Mother had assured him that Jerry would be all right again in a few days. He and Jerry were playing acrobats in the haymow, and then they got tired of that and came down and were looking around for something else to do. They had no intention of coming near the house until after all the ladies had cleared out. That's why they had on their old clothes and were barefooted. Mother had promised to see that some ice-cream was saved for them. As they passed through the carriage shed, Ned noticed the sickle stuck in a rafter, and he just thought he'd try it and see whether it was sharp or not.

Here Mother interrupted, and asked him if he didn't remember that he had been told not to play with it.

"Yes," said Ned, with downcast eyes, "I did think of that, but I didn't intend to play with it. I thought I'd only try it once, to see whether it was sharp or not, and then put it right straight back again where it belonged."

And then he went on, "So I went out in the alley

The Sewing Circle

where the highest weeds are, and I thought you'd like to have them cut down, Mother, so I started to cut them. You see, I had to cut something, to see whether the sickle was sharp or not. And then Jerry came up and said, 'You'd better put that sickle back where it belongs, because you know we're not supposed to use it,' and I said, 'All right, just as soon as I get these weeds cut down.' But Jerry had to stand and watch me, and he stood so close, and when I made the next stroke, I don't know how it happened, but Jerry's leg got right in the way. I knew that I hit something hard, and I thought it must be a stone or a post or something, and then I heard a noise and looked around. And Jerry was lying down in the alley and looked funny, and then I ran to tell you . . . and Mother . . . I'll never touch that sickle again . . . I won't, I won't . . ." and poor Ned burst into tears and it took Mother a long time to get him quiet. And Mother said he had been punished enough.

The doctor and Joe Beck carried Jerry upstairs to his bed, and left him there all bandaged up. Ella took some books and went upstairs to keep him company, and read to him. The doctor said it would only be a matter of a few days until the stitches could be taken out, and then Jerry wouldn't even remember what had happened to him. Mother came upstairs to see if he was comfortably fixed in bed, before she went on with the Sewing Circle meeting. When

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Jerry said it didn't hurt at all, Mother said, "Of course not! Many things much worse than that will happen to you before you're married twice!" So it was not as serious as it might have been.

Downstairs, the excitement was over. Father had missed it all. As soon as the business of the day was finished, he went over to the church. The ladies got out their sewing, and leaned back to talk and visit. They were making nightgowns for the Orphans' Christmas Box. There were many things to talk about, and many orphans to sew for. So their tongues went as fast as their needles. The children went outdoors to play in the lawn swing and the hammock. Willie Smeezle whimpered in the corner, behind his mother's chair. She knew better than to let him out of her sight for an instant. Hazel and Milly and Flora went out in the kitchen to see if Mother would let them help with the lunch. But she wouldn't.

"No, no, not this time. Don't bother me. I haven't time. No, you can't dish the ice-cream. . . . Run on out in the yard."

Just then the telephone bell rang. Three rings.

Flora counted, and ran to call Mother. The telephone was in the sitting room. It was the standing up kind, and Mother was so tall she had to bend over to answer it. Then she told Milly to run over to the church and call Father, and tell him he must go and make a sick-call in the country, right away.

The Sewing Circle

All the ladies were listening and wondering who it could be, but Mother didn't mention any name. She called Ella down from upstairs and told her and Flora to go and get Ben hitched up and ready for Father. And then she hurried out to the kitchen again to dish the ice-cream.

Ella put the harness on, and Flora rolled the buggy out in the alley. Ben stepped under the shafts nicely, and Ella and Flora were just buckling the straps, when Father came around the house from the church, with the afternoon paper in his hand. The paper boy had just given it to him.

Flora expected Father to say something about who was sick or where he was going. She had seen Mother stop him for a minute by the porch to tell him who had telephoned. But Father just started to read the paper, as if he was not going anywhere. Ella said, "I can't get the belly-band fastened, Father." But Father didn't seem to hear. He kept on standing right there in the middle of the alley, looking at the newspaper. In a moment, he looked up at the girls very seriously and said:

"President McKinley has been shot!"

A fly settled on Ben's back and he tried to switch it off with his tail. Flora took her hand and brushed it off. Then she went on buckling buckles. Ben's buckles must be buckled. Ben's buckles must be buckled.

"President McKinley has been shot!"

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Neither Ella nor Flora could say a word. Ned came around the barn and asked what was the matter. Milly and Hazel Higgins came from the house to ask if they could go along with Father. But they forgot all about it when Father said again:

"President McKinley has been shot!"

Would things never stop happening? All on the same day, too. First Willie and then Jerry and now this. And this was dreadful! But Ben's buckles must be buckled.

Father sat down on the wheelbarrow just inside the barn door to read the paper, and the children crowded round and looked over his shoulder.

"It was in the Temple of Music, and he was holding a reception, to shake hands with people. Mother and I passed by there many times just last week. We were wishing we had taken our trip a week later so we could see the President,—and now he's shot!"

"Is he dead, Father?" asked Ned in a scared voice.

"No, it seems not, but there isn't much hope. It happened yesterday in the Temple of Music. There were hundreds of people in line, waiting to shake hands. The man who shot him had a handkerchief wrapped round his hand to look as if it had been injured. But it was only to conceal a revolver. He pretended to shake hands with the President, but shot him instead."

The Sewing Circle

"*He-must-have-been-a-bad-man!*" said Milly slowly.

"Oh, Father," cried Ella, "Just think, you and Mother might have been right there shaking hands, too, and you might have seen him shoot the President. . . ."

"He might have shot *you* . . ." Milly wailed.

"No, Father might have helped to catch him," volunteered Ned.

The children stood silent and awe-struck. Nothing like this had happened before. Then Father said he must be going, and handed Flora the paper to take in to Mother. Then he got into the buggy and drove off to make his sick-call.

How strange that the Sewing Circle was still meeting! They seemed to have been meeting forever and ever. And talking. And laughing. And sewing. The orphans should have had their night-gowns long ago. And the ladies had hardly begun on their ice-cream and cake. Why wasn't it melted long ago?

Flora ran into the parlor.

"President McKinley has been shot!"

Flora said it as loud as she could, but her voice seemed to have dried up. The talking stopped. You might have heard a pin drop, if anybody had dropped one. She cleared her throat, and tried to say it again, but the words wouldn't come. Every eye was turned in her direction. She felt her cheeks

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

burning. She felt her knees trembling. But the words wouldn't come.

"What did you say? How do you know? What is it? Whoever heard of such a thing? Tell it again!" The questions were hurled at her like stones. Every eye was pointed at her. Then, Mother at last. Mother to the rescue.

Mother took the paper out of her hand, and read it all, aloud. Then the flood-gates of conversation opened again. Everybody began to talk at once. The paper was passed around for everybody to read. Dishes of ice-cream sat around and melted. Night-gowns for orphans lay around on the floor unfinished. Babies squalled and children whimpered. There seemed to be nothing to do but go home. So the ladies put on their hats and went.

After they were gone, Mother sat down with the paper, and the children clustered around her, while she read it once more, aloud. All but Jerry, who was still in bed, of course. Then they all had to go upstairs and tell him about all the excitement, and give him the paper to read.

The next paper did not come until Monday afternoon. Never was the Cincinnati *Times-Star* more eagerly waited for. The news was good. The paper said that the President was better, and there was every hope for his recovery. Each day, the news got better and better, and everybody was relieved to know that he was getting well. Jerry got



Flora said it as loud as she could
but her voice seemed to have
dried up.

The Sewing Circle

out of bed on the fifth day, but was still bandaged up. He felt a little proud of having his accident happen on the same day as the President's. That is, as long as the President was getting better.

Then, on Saturday, just a week later, the paper came with a heavy black band around it. President McKinley was dead! Milly found the paper first where the paper boy had thrown it on the porch, and ran to Mother with it. Every one knew that something was wrong before Mother read it aloud.

"What a pity!" Father said, "Just when he was getting along so well, too!"

And Mother said, "Poor Mrs. McKinley!"

After that, they didn't talk about it much.

Always afterwards, President McKinley and Jerry's sickle and those buckles on Ben's harness seemed to be all mixed up together in Flora's mind, and she never thought of one without thinking of the others, as long as she lived.

As for the Sewing Circle, all the ladies agreed that they had never had a more exciting meeting,—and that they never wanted one.



CHAPTER VI

KEEPING BEES



*Poor little bee
Works all the day,
Looking for honey
To carry away.*

*Is it hard work,
Poor little bee?
Making sweet honey,
For people like Me?*

*I could feel sorry,
Save for one thing;
I could feel pity,
Were it not for
your
STING!*

Chapter VI

KEEPING BEES



R. BAXTER was a very funny person. He was always doing curious and interesting things. He called them his hobbies. Every preacher should have a hobby.

The first hobby that Flora could remember was Cactus. He built a big gold frame and filled it with all shapes and sizes of cactus, each more prickly than the other. The front porch was full of them, too, steps and all. He took a photograph of the five children standing in a row, admiring the cactus.

Canaries came next. The back yard was full of cages, and the cages were full of canaries. One cage was about six feet high. He took a photograph of the children standing in a row on the other side of it.

He always had a camera or a kodak of some kind, and was always exchanging it and getting a different kind. Of all the hobbies, photography lasted over

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

a longer period of years than any of the others, though even it died a natural death in the course of time. He took pictures off and on for years, but sometimes forgot all about his camera for months at a time, while he was busy thinking about something else. But Ella and Flora and Milly could usually count on getting their pictures taken each time they got a new dress. Sunday afternoon was a good time to take them. But taking pictures is another story.

Raising Belgian Hares was an engaging occupation while it lasted. Rhode Island Reds were interesting, not only for the fresh eggs, but also for Sunday dinners. Bees provided honey—and stings.

It was just after Father gave up keeping chickens, that he decided to keep bees. Mother did not like the idea much, because she said the bees would probably roost on the clothes-line, the back yard was so small. But Father said there was nothing nicer than good fresh honey, fresh from your own bee, so he got bees.

Father knew a man in the country who said he would give him a swarm to start. He said one swarm was enough to start with and after that told him to be sure and catch all the swarms that swarmed and in that way collect quite a lot. Father sent away for books on the subject, and spent all his spare time reading up.

The book that Father liked best was called, "How

Keeping Bees

to Keep a Bee." The very first sentence said, "Beekeepers as a class are very enthusiastic about their occupation. Their animated interest is commonly spoken of as 'the bee fever'."

Nothing could be truer than that. Father got "the bee fever" as soon as he opened that book. Mother said it was a pity he ever bought it. It would have saved a lot of trouble, if he hadn't. It was not long until he felt that he knew all about bees. He spent many days at Ned's work-bench in the woodshed, both boys helping him, and soon he had a row of about six hives, all painted white, sitting along in front of the chicken-coop. He invited the whole family to come out and admire them!

"That will be fine!" said Father. "With all this grassy slope in front, they'll have plenty of space to exercise in. The book says they must have plenty of pasture."

And Mother said yes, it would be fine, but how about hanging out the clothes? But Father didn't hear, as usual.

One fine day in May, the man in the country called up and told Father to come, and Father hitched up Ben and went.

Milly was the first one to hear him driving up the alley late in the afternoon.

She called, "Hooray! Here he comes!" and all the children ran out to meet him. On the seat beside him in the buggy was an old wooden hive.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

"Where are they?" asked Milly. "I don't see any bees!"

"Well, you didn't expect him to drive them along the road like cows, did you?" asked Ned.

Jerry helped Father carry the old hive without tipping, and they set it down gingerly in front of the first new hive in the row. The front opening was stuffed up with paper.

"Now," said Father, "it will only take me a minute to get ready," and he went into the woodshed. The minute was a long one, and finally Mother went in to see what was the matter. Father must have gotten tangled up in the mosquito-netting, judging from the noises that came from the woodshed, but it did not take Mother long to untangle him.

This was the first time the children had ever seen the Bee Outfit. And it did look so funny! They all laughed. Ned and Jerry laughed so hard they went rolling over backwards on the ground, and couldn't stop till Father asked them to come and help.

Father's outfit consisted of a five-year-old straw hat that Mother had found in the attic, with a veil of black mosquito-netting dropping from the brim. The book said that bees do not like white mosquito-netting. The netting was attached to the hat by means of an elastic band around the crown. Another elastic band went around Father's neck, with "plenty of fullness to allow the netting to droop

Keeping Bees

loosely over the shoulders, while permitting freedom of motion and unobstructed sight." Then he had gloves on, to the wrists of which Mother had sewed some old black stockings to go up the arms, so there would be no danger of any bees getting up Father's sleeves. Last of all, he had a little brown smoker, with a charcoal fire in it, and when you puffed it it made a lot of smoke.

"This will do the trick," said Father, as he explained to the family how it worked. "The book says, 'It is next to impossible to do anything with bees without the use of smoke.' So all you have to do is to gently puff it in the direction you want them to go, and they just go! And, boys, remember, when you are big enough to look after your own bees, make this your rule: Always be gentle with a bee. You will only antagonize them if you are rough."

With that, he turned and approached the hive quietly, puffing his smoker at arm's length in front of him. When he reached the hive, he gave two or three strong puffs, to fill the general vicinity with smoke,—“just to be on the safe side,” he said. Then he set the smoker down, lifted the new hive off its base, and put the old one filled with bees in its place. Then he took off its top, and the family could see that the inside was black with squirming, crawling bees, and they all said, “Oh-h-h!” Then he set the top half of the new hive on top.

“Now,” he said, “the queen will go upstairs and

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

begin housekeeping. As soon as the rest of the family has moved up, we can take the old hive away, and then we've got 'em!"

And everybody said, "Oh-h-h!" again.

But somehow, these didn't seem to be the good, obedient bees that the book mentioned, for instead of going up to their new flat to live, they all began to come out of a tiny crack between the two hives that Father hadn't noticed. The paper that had plugged up the front door fell to the ground unexpectedly, and that was another invitation to come out and explore the yard. Father started smoking the smoker energetically to make them go back where they belonged. Perhaps he smoked them too much, for the book said, "Care should be taken not to use any more smoke than is necessary, a common fault with beginners." Or perhaps the farmer had given Father a swarm of the Cross Black Bees that the book mentioned, instead of the gentle Italian ones.

Anyhow, something was wrong. Before any one knew what was happening, the yard was full of bees instead of the hive. The queen must have decided to go for a walk. Probably she was like some other ladies, and did not like housekeeping.

Jerry yelled, "Run for your lives!" and the family did,—even Father. And nobody got stung, thank goodness!

They all ran to the house, and called in Ponto



They all stood at the back bedroom window and looked out.

Keeping Bees

and Joe Bill, and shut all the doors and windows, too. And Mother said, "Thank goodness, not a single bee got in!" They all stood at the back bedroom window and looked out. The yard was black with bees as far as they could see. Katie Giffen from next door started to come over to get a bucket of water, but changed her mind and went back.

"How'll Jerry ever get out to feed the horse?" asked Milly.

"He'll have to go out the front door and go all the way round the block and come up the back alley," suggested Ella.

"Aw, no," said Jerry, "I'm not afraid of 'em. Give me the bee bonnet and I'll risk it."

So he put it on and stuck his hands in his pockets and made a dash through the grape-arbor, Ponto at his heels. When he got inside the barn door, he turned and waved his hand to the family to let them know that he and Ponto were all right.

All through supper and dish washing they buzzed and flew, and they were still at it when the family went to bed that night.

Father said, "I do wish I knew how to get those bees to bed! The book doesn't say anything about that!"

And Mother said, "I guess there's nothing to do but wait till morning and then see what we can do." So they waited till morning.

In the morning, there wasn't a single bee to be

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

seen in the yard. And when Father went to look, he came back in the house with a broad smile on his face and said, "They went into the third hive instead of the first! Ours are very fastidious bees, as they should be!" He put his arms around Mother's waist and danced a jig with her.

"I was afraid they had gone back to their home in the country," said Mother, as she sank to a chair out of breath.

So that's the way the Baxters got their bees. After that, they waited a long time for them to get tame, but they didn't. They didn't seem to like the family. They went about their business of gathering honey every day and paid no attention to anybody, except to chase the ones who happened to come near. The back yard was not very large, and the part that was not taken up by the clothes-line was taken up by a croquet game. After the bees came, there was not much comfort in croquet, what with having to squeeze up the arches, and be careful to dodge the bees, both.

It was Flora who got the first sting,—right on her upper lip, too. It looked terrible, and felt as bad as it looked. Hers was the first sting of the family, but there was small glory in that. For after that first exciting day, the family kept away from the vicinity of the hives. All except Flora,—and the reason she got stung first was because she forgot completely that Father was keeping bees.

Keeping Bees

Of course, Flora was not the only one. Everybody else got their stings in the course of time, especially Jerry, but that's another story.

Flora and Milly were playing under the sweet-apple tree. It was Sunday afternoon, and Flora had on her white dotted swiss with the ruffles. The Krapp girls were there and Hazel Higgins. They sat on the grass and played Mumbley-Peg for a while, then they got tired of sitting, and started to play Hidey-Go, which is short for Hide-and-Seek.

Hazel was "It" and the base was on the cellar door. Fannie Krapp and Flora ran into the woodshed, and thought they would hide there. Then they changed their minds and ran around the barn into the back alley. Fannie got caught before she got to the back alley. She was always so slow, anyhow. But Hazel hadn't seen Flora, so she ran on around, climbed the back fence and came up through the raspberry bushes and the rhubarb, to the far side of the chicken-coop. Just then, she saw Hazel, who had by this time caught everybody else, running to the front of the house, and that gave Flora her chance.

She made a dash for the cellar door. But she had forgotten the bees entirely. Her path lay diagonally in front of the row of hives. Not until she was surrounded by a buzzing swarm did she come to her senses. She ran,—faster than she had intended. When she landed on the cellar door in

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

a heap, she felt something on her upper lip, and when she lifted her hand she found to her horror that it was A BEE! She threw it out of her hand in disgust, but was afraid to step on it.

The girls all realized that something was wrong, because her face was so red and she looked frightened to death. Some one ran to call Mother, and by the time she came, it had begun to swell. Hot as fire . . . sharp, like needles . . . or thistles . . . and big, big as . . . a barn door . . . how can it get so big? Oh-h-h, no! Take the looking glass away . . . never want to see one . . . again! Only clay, wet . . . yellow clay . . . to cool it . . . oh, that feels so good . . . and Mother's lap. . . .

It looked dreadful and it hurt badly for several days, but after that, Flora never forgot that Father was keeping bees.

There were other stings, too. Ned stepped on one with his bare foot, and howled so loud that all the neighbors came running to see if he had been killed. But Mother said it would take a lot more than that to kill Ned. And Flora agreed with Mother. Ella got a sting on her arm one time, just where her short sleeve stopped, but she insisted it didn't hurt. She was getting to be very much of a young lady, and was trying to act very grown-up. That's probably the reason she didn't pay much attention to it.

Keeping Bees

But the worst time of all was the time that Jerry got stung, and after that, Father didn't keep bees any more.

The man in the country who gave Father the bees told him "to be sure and catch all the swarms that swarmed, and in that way, collect quite a lot." Early in the spring of the second year, Grandma came for a visit. In April, she began to quote:

"A swarm of bees in May is worth a ton of hay!
A swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon!"

And Ned advised Father to order a May one. Beginning with the first day of May, the family was on the look-out. But nothing happened. The family waited and waited for them to swarm, but they didn't. Not in May, but in June, of course.

When they swarmed the first time, it was very exciting. The family shut up all the windows and doors of the house again, and watched them out of the back-bedroom window. They swirled and swirled for hours. It couldn't be called anything else but swirling. When they finally decided to settle, they settled way up on the tip-top branch of the sweet-apple tree. Father and Mother and all the children got out with dishpans and kettles and carpet-beaters, and banged and made all the noise they could,—just like the book said. But nothing happened, except that they scared the bees away. That's called "absconding" in the book.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Another time when they swarmed, they flew about in the yard for several days, which was inconvenient, to say the least, as it lasted over a Monday, and Tuesday was rainy, so the wash had to wait till Wednesday. They finally settled on the peak of the gable of the barn. The boys climbed up with dish-pans, and Father had a new hive ready on the ground below, but nothing happened except that the bees absconded again.

Ned said, "Oh, well, who cares? They're only worth a silver spoon, anyhow!"

But finally Mother caught one, and hived it.

Bees like to swarm on Sunday better than on any other day. It's funny, but it's true. The sweet-apple tree one was on Sunday, and so was the barn one,—and so was the grape-arbor one. In fact, every single one of them.

Mother was all dressed and ready to go to church. The children had all gone to Sunday School, and so had Father. The Sunday roast was in the oven, and the pies were at the kitchen window to cool. Mother happened to pass the back-bedroom window, to pull the shade a little lower, to keep the hot morning sun out, when she noticed a black cloud over the yard. That meant just one thing. She watched for a minute. When she saw them settling on the grape-arbor, she took off her hat and put on her sunbonnet.

She told the family afterwards that she forgot

Keeping Bees

all about bee bonnets and smoke and just took the dishpan and a stick of wood that happened to be lying handy. She held the dishpan under the swarm, and knocked on the arbor with her stick, and all the bees fell into the pan. Then she carried it over to one of the empty hives and set it down in front. And they all climbed up and went in the front door, like good, obedient children. As easy as that!

She wasn't scared at all, and never once thought of getting stung. And she got to church in plenty of time for the sermon!

They talked about it all through Sunday dinner, and Father said, "There's nobody like Mother!"

That was the only swarm they ever caught. The other hives stayed empty until Father got rid of his whole bee outfit, and took to raising flowers for a change.

Jerry was interested in bees from the first and always helped Father a great deal. He read the books, too, and said he was going to be a bee-man when he grew up. But, later on, he did not care to be reminded of that.

One day, Father came in, all dressed up in his bee bonnet and other fixings. Jerry was in the kitchen, sampling some of Mother's fresh cookies.

"Come on out, Jerry, and help me," said Father. "I want to show you something new!"

"Something new?" asked Mother. "What's that?"

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

But Father and Jerry were out in the woodshed by that time.

Flora and Milly were playing with their dolls on the cellar door. They saw Father and Jerry opening up the hives and doing something. But they were not specially interested, as the bees were an old story by this time. They were even tired of the taste of honey, and Mother gave it to the neighbors to get rid of it.

Suddenly they heard shrieks and they dropped their dolls to stare. There was Jerry jumping about wildly and waving his arms and yelling as loud as he could. The air was filled with bees.

"They must be swarming on Jerry," cried Milly, and ran to the house to call Mother.

Flora couldn't move. Her knees were made of wood. All she could do was watch. In a moment, Father's antics were as wild as Jerry's, and their shouts could be heard all over town.

After what seemed ages, they got to the woodshed, and Flora was relieved to see that most of the bees had been left behind. At least the air still seemed to be full of them. Mother ran out to the woodshed, followed by Ella, and, in another second, Flora saw Ella running back to the house and heard her shout that she was going for the doctor. When Flora heard that, she felt that she must do something, too. She suddenly found that her legs would work, and so she ran through the side gate to Mrs.

Keeping Bees

Giffen's house, and told her and Katie to come quick.

They helped get Father and Jerry into the house and to bed. And after the doctor came, they helped to rub them with medicines and things. Yellow clay wasn't much good this time, even if it was wet. Father and Jerry were miserable for a long time, for they both had been stung many times.

Neither Father nor Jerry wanted to talk about it. They were pretty much ashamed of themselves for getting stung so badly,—when they considered themselves such expert bee-men. But Mrs. Giffen and Katie had spread the story over town pretty much, and everybody knew that something exciting had happened, so it was Mother who had to do most of the explaining.

It seems that one little bee had started all the trouble. One little bee got inside Jerry's veil. This bee started stinging him, and Jerry made the first mistake of thinking there were at least a dozen bees instead of one. And he insisted upon it ever afterwards. He made his second mistake by not letting the bee out of his veil quietly and saying nothing about it. He should have run quickly to the woodshed and let the bee out there, and that would have been the end of it. Instead, he began to act wildly and get excited. Nothing infuriates bees more than people who get excited. Jerry forgot all about being calm. That infuriated both the bee in his bonnet, and all the other bees as well. Father started to

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

tell Jerry what to do and what not to do. But he got excited and forgot to be calm too. He knocked his own bonnet off, and the bees got inside, and he was stung almost as badly as Jerry.

The experience cured them both of the bee fever. And that was the reason why Father stopped keeping bees.

For a long time, the family didn't dare to talk about it.

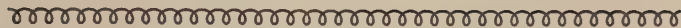
But one day, Mother said to Jerry, "Well, Jerry, did Father teach you *something new* about bees?"

And ever since then, they have laughed about it.



CHAPTER VII

FLORA HERSELF



*When I Grow Up,
I mean to be
A millionaire-ess,—
You shall see!*

*When I Grow Up,
I mean to do
All the things
I'm told not to.*

*When I Grow Up,
I mean to roam
Around the world,—
And then come home.*

Chapter VII

FLORA HERSELF



VERY early in life, Flora decided to be a dressmaker. She began to sew at six, she made dresses for her dolls at seven, and hats at eight. One day, Mrs. Pearson, who brought the family butter from her farm in the

country every week, found her sewing on the front porch.

"My dear child, you'll never be a dressmaker, if you can't use a thimble!"

That was a blow to Flora, for she had quite made up her mind to do without one. Thimbles were such a nuisance,—not the slightest bit of use, and always falling off unexpectedly. But Mrs. Pearson sounded so sure of herself, that she decided to try her thimble again and see. Sure enough, she felt *much* more like a real dressmaker than before. And from that day on, her future was decided, and her little tin thimble got no rest.

Flora's enthusiasm reached great heights. When

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Hazel Higgins came over to play, the dolls did exciting things, like going to church, or getting sick and having a doctor, or getting dead and buried. But when Flora was alone, her dolls spent most of their time trying on their new clothes. Dresses with yokes and tucks and gores. Inverted box-plaits and bias bands. French seams and fell seams. Shirred frillings and hemstitched ruffles. Nightgowns with flowing sleeves and jackets with brass buttons and lapels. What fun to be a dressmaker!

Flora's dolls were a part of herself. They shared in everything she did, whether it was making the beds or helping with the cleaning or going to church or getting a new dress. The dolls knew all about it. If not actually present in person, they always heard about it afterwards. They were sympathetic or sad or enthusiastic or happy whenever necessary.

One Sunday afternoon, the family was sitting on the front porch. It was hot, very hot. Mother brought out the palm-leaf fans and the cardboard ones handed out free by Mr. R. B. Babcock, the Hardware Store man. It was too hot to read. It was too hot to fan. Father took his pipe and yesterday's newspaper, and sat on the top step. Mrs. Lon Shafer and Mrs. George Smeezle came over after a while, and visited with Mother in rockers. Ella and Jerry started a game of croquet in the back yard. The sound of their voices echoed faintly. Milly and Ned were playing with Ponto, who was

Flora Herself

hitched up to the rickety old tin wagon. It was too hot for Ponto, too, so he sat right down in his tracks to pant, whenever he felt like it, harness or no harness. Finally Ned gave up in disgust, and Milly didn't get her ride, after all.

Flora took her book and sat down in a chair in one corner of the porch. It was hot, very hot. When she looked up, as she turned the pages over, she noticed the sun creeping up on the porch floor, closer and closer to her feet. The book was "Elsie Dinsmore," an old favorite. She had read it through so many times she couldn't count them all. For the first time, she noticed Elsie's eternal goodness, and wondered why it got her into trouble on every page. Then too, Elsie's tears were always flowing or else trickling through her fingers. Girls in books were funny. It had been good reading before,—perhaps it was too hot to-day!

Mrs. Shafer and Mrs. Smeezle talked and Mother listened mostly. The sound of their voices made a rumble in Flora's ears. Mother wasn't able to get a word in edgewise. Her throat must be drying up the way she said it did when she had to sit and listen to people who talked as if they had been wound up like an alarm clock. Why didn't they stop to take a breath once in a while? Their tongues must be parched like Robinson Crusoe's. If they kept on much longer, they'd have to hang them out like Ponto did on hot days. How did they find out

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

all the news? Where did they get so much to talk about? And their arms must be as tired as their tongues, at the rate they were fanning. Fanning makes you hotter, instead of cooler. Whoever invented fans and fooled everybody? Now they were slacking up a little. Perhaps their tongues *were* tired! Perhaps they *had* run out of things to talk about! Mrs. Shafer blew her nose vigorously. Mrs. Smeezle wiped the perspiration off her forehead and looked at the black smudge it made on her handkerchief. That gave Father a chance.

"The paper says here that the price of coal is going up to \$4.50 a ton this winter!"

"Land sakes!" said Mrs. Smeezle. "I never heard the like! How do you s'pose ordinary folks are ever goin' to be able to keep warm?"

"That's what I say!" said Mrs. Shafer. "What's the world comin' to, anyway? Now with this terrible bicycle craze. . . ."

No, it would be a long time till they reached the panting stage, like Ponto. Like thunder piling up black clouds in the distance, like gales advancing with terrific speed, the conversation descended and blotted out the landscape.

A fly lighted on Father's bald spot. He took his newspaper to shoo it off. Then he shook the ashes out of his pipe onto Mother's geranium bed, and walked round the house.

Flora sat staring at her book, but couldn't seem

Flora Herself

to get interested in Elsie. Elsie belonged to another world. Like a sawmill in action, the conversation rumbled on, a continual buzz. Then Milly came up with the doll carriage full of dolls. Flora closed up her book and took it in the house.

They settled themselves on the front steps. They were trying to think up something for the dolls to do,—not too exciting for Sunday. And then Miss Heckle came to call. When she came to call on week-days or evenings, she didn't dress up and didn't even bother to put on a hat. She lived just around the corner. But when she came to call on Sundays, she wore her Sunday dress and her very best hat. If the hat happened to be brand-new, she was more apt to come to call than otherwise. Flora saw the new hat that morning in Sunday School, and hated it. It had things sticking out in all directions, and looked too much like a straw-stack.

Miss Heckle nodded to Mrs. Smeezle and Mrs. Shafer, and Mother went inside to bring out another rocker. Miss Heckle stopped by the steps to speak to Flora and Milly and see what they were doing. When she saw a row of dolls on the steps and more in their laps, she smiled her curious smile, looked straight at Flora, and said:

"What! A big girl like you still playing with dolls? You're too big to play with dolls!"

Then she smiled again, and, without waiting for an answer, went up the steps to join the ladies.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Flora's world tumbled about her head. Too big . . . *too big* . . . TOO BIG . . . *to play with dolls!* What did she mean? Why did she smile in that funny way? What did she mean . . . "playing with dolls"? Precious, beautiful, lovely dolls! What did she mean? *Too big to play with dolls!* Whoever heard of such a thing! Mother did not think she was too big. Mother helped her to cut patterns and make dresses. Mother thought that dolls were all right for even a big girl. Nine . . . going on ten . . . that's not so big . . . yet. You can play with dolls until you're grown up. Yes, you can. Mother said so. Mother knows. Mother knows everything. Mothers know more than Sunday-School teachers. Mother still has two of her dolls. Of course they're packed away. She doesn't play with them. . . .

The tears rolled down Flora's cheeks. She gathered her dolls into her arms with a strenuous hug. The world was knocked topsy-turvy. And Miss Heckle sat on the porch and gossiped!

Then Milly said, "It's too hot here in the sun! Your face is red as a beet. Let's go round in the shade, under the sweet-apple tree!" Milly brought out the doll-buggy and the wooden bed, and settled down to housekeeping. Flora sat and watched. She didn't hear Milly's chatter. One thought kept ringing through her head. She couldn't think of anything else,—"*What! a big . . . girl . . . like*



And then Miss Heckle
came to call.

Flora Herself

you . . . still . . . playing . . . with . . . dolls!"

The next day was Monday. When the washing was nearly done, Flora asked Mother to please save the water in the tubs for her. Mother said all right, because she wanted to keep it till evening anyhow, to water the plants with. Flora got out all the dresses, all the beautiful shirred and pleated and gathered and tucked dresses,—dirty or not,—and washed them carefully. She hung them in the shade to dry, so they wouldn't fade.

On Tuesday, while Mother was ironing, Flora climbed up on a chair to watch. Mother told her to run out of the kitchen,—it was too hot, and Flora was looking white and peaked. Why not lie down in the hammock and read awhile? Yes, but tell me something first! There is something I must know!

"Mother, do you think a girl of nine, going on ten, is too big to play with dolls?"

"Why, no, dear, of course not! Who put such a silly idea into your head?"

"Oh . . . I was . . . just thinking . . . I might be . . . getting . . . too big. . . ."

"Ridiculous! Why, nine's the best time of all for playing with dolls,—and ten, and eleven, and twelve! Why, I played with dolls until I was fifteen! But girls grow up quicker now than they used to. They like to put their hair up on their heads and call themselves Ladies and Grown Up, when they are still little girls. They like to be old before they are

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

ever young! They want to miss all the little-girl good times, and enjoy all the big-lady troubles! I don't want my girls to Grow Up. I want them to stay Little Girls as long as they can. I want you to play with dolls until you are forty!"

Why did grown-ups think they had all the trouble? Why did they think that children had none? Why was everything so mixed-up and hard to understand? No, Mother must be wrong this time. Miss Heckle must know better than Mother. Miss Heckle was a Sunday-School teacher. A Sunday-School teacher couldn't be wrong. And Miss Heckle was a specially good Sunday-School teacher, too,—made the children learn everything by heart. . . . Mother's ideas were old-fashioned. . . .

When Mother finished her ironing, Flora began hers. The iron stayed hot for a long time. Long after the fire went out. All the beautiful dresses,—shirred and pleated and gathered and tucked,—she ironed them all painstakingly, without a single wrinkle. Then she packed them away in the little doll's trunk. She found a box to hold her dolls, and she put tissue-paper between them and around them. Then she carried the trunk and the box up to the attic and hid them in a dark corner. Children in books dig a real hole and bury them in the real earth, like Milly did the dead sparrow last week, but nobody ever heard of a live person doing such a thing. Anything can happen in a book, but attics

Flora Herself

are bad enough in real life, especially if they're leaky. It doesn't matter where you put them. It's putting them away forever that's hard.

No more dolls. No more dressmaking. No more weddings and funerals and christenings. No more fun. Nothing to do. Nothing to do but eat three meals a day and go to bed at night. The world was dead. The future was black. She didn't want to be a dressmaker, after all.

The next day, Mother had a letter from her old friend, Miss Edna Bolivar, of Smithfield. The letter said that Miss Bolivar was coming for a visit. Flora had forgotten what she looked like, but she knew that she was Mother's best friend, and she remembered the books and presents that came every Christmas from Miss Bolivar. Miss Bolivar must be nice. It would be wonderful to have a visit from Miss Bolivar.

The moment she arrived, you could tell that Miss Bolivar was different. She wore silk dresses that rustled, with tight, tight sleeves, and high, high collars. Her eyes turned up at the corners, so that she seemed to be always laughing. She had a lace handkerchief tucked under her belt, and she wore a gold watch pinned up on one shoulder by means of a solid gold pin. Miss Bolivar was wonderful. So different from any of the Pleasantville ladies. You could tell at once that she came from the city. Even the way she combed her hair was different.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

The children were afraid to say a word at dinner on that first day. Father and Mother did all the talking, and seemed extra polite. There must have been something to eat, but if there was, Flora didn't notice it. Oh, to be a fine lady . . . with silken skirts . . . and a solid gold watch. . . .

Right after dinner, Miss Bolivar said, "Now, let's go up and see what I've got in my suit-case! Come on, everybody!"

No one could resist. Flora and Milly took her hands, and Ella squeezed between and put an arm around her waist. The boys ran on ahead, and Ned slid down the banister a few times, head-first, to show off. Father and Mother waited downstairs.

Even the spare room looked different, now that Miss Bolivar lived there. The shades were pulled down half-way, the lace curtains were pulled together, and the light was dim and mysterious. A curious perfume filled the air. It must have come from the beautiful bottle on the bureau, with the bulb attached. Miss Bolivar showed them how it worked, one squeeze on Ella, one on Flora, and one on Milly, but none for the boys, because boys don't use perfume. Then she pulled out her second suit-case from under the bed.

The children waited breathlessly. Out came the presents, one at a time. A pink satin sash for Ella, and a hair ribbon, six inches wide, to match! A game of Indoor Ping Pong for Jerry! Oh, see how

Flora Herself

the celluloid balls can bounce! A big fat baseball mitt for Ned! And dolls! Two beautiful, jointed dolls, with curly hair and sleeping eyes for Flora and Milly!

The others ran off downstairs with their treasures. Flora and Milly clasped the dolls to their hearts. Never had they seen such beauties. Natural curly hair, Flora's yellow, Milly's brown; silk dresses and patent leather slippers with tiny buckles! The underwear had lace on it, but was very flimsy upon careful examination. They must have new underwear the very first thing! Miss Bolivar said so!

Then Flora remembered! She was not going to be a dressmaker any more! She was too big to play with dolls!

She thrust the big, beautiful jointed doll back into Miss Bolivar's hands.

"I don't want it! I can't take it! Oh-h-h!" and she rushed from the room, so Miss Bolivar wouldn't see her cry.

Miss Bolivar was wonderful. She didn't ask her why she didn't want the doll. She acted as if nothing had happened. Flora loved Miss Bolivar for that.

There were wonderful things happening every day during Miss Bolivar's visit. Trips to Banksville and Mercer, and rides in the country and picnics in the woods. Apple dumplings with cream for dessert, the best white tablecloth on all the time and three

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

leaves in the table. Ella dusted the parlor and the sitting room every morning and kept the vases on the mantelpiece filled with fresh flowers from the garden. And, best of all, there was chicken and ice-cream on Sunday. It was wonderful to have company. Especially Miss Bolivar.

After Flora and Miss Bolivar got acquainted, Miss Bolivar said she must get something for Flora to take the place of the doll. So they made a special trip to Banksville and she bought—a wonderful box of water-color paints! . Eight colors, and you mix them on the lid,—red, yellow, blue, purple, brown, black, and two kinds of green, light and dark! And a place in the middle for two brushes of real camel's hair! And then Miss Bolivar said there must be some water-color paper, too. So she bought a whole pad of it.

The minute Flora saw that box of water-colors in the store, she made up her mind to be an artist! What fun to be an artist! She saw a picture of one in a book one time. What fun to paint pictures all day long! Comfortable, pleasant, and easy,—more like play. Much nicer than getting married and spending your life washing dishes and other things you hate. It might be worth while growing up after all, if you could spend all your time doing something you liked. . . . Go out and . . . sit under a tree . . . with the breezes blowing . . . not too hot . . . and the sky full of clouds! Much nicer

Flora Herself

than being a dressmaker, and sitting all day long in a stuffy room, breaking your back, sewing!

It was Miss Bolivar who showed Flora how to make Christmas cards, painted with a snow-scene and tied up with a red ribbon. It was Miss Bolivar who sent for Hemingway's Embroidery Catalogue, and Flower and Seed Catalogues with colored pictures in them, and showed her how to copy them. It was Miss Bolivar who got her started copying the covers on the *Ladies' Home Companion*. Miss Bolivar was full of suggestions. She could always think up things to do. She never ran out of ideas.

And when the time came for her visit to end, she asked as a special favor to be allowed to have one of Flora's paintings to take home with her. She said she wanted to have it framed to hang on the wall beside her bed! She chose the one of the yellow roses. Flora insisted that she take them all, but she said no, she couldn't do that. She wanted the yellow roses particularly, because she liked yellow roses better than any other flower.

And then as a very last request, she begged to see Flora's dolls. Flora couldn't refuse Miss Bolivar anything. Dear, sweet, beautiful Miss Bolivar. So she went to the attic, and brought the trunk and the box of dolls out into the spare room. Miss Bolivar's suit-cases were packed and standing by the door. But her train did not come until after dinner, so there was plenty of time.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Flora was very sad as she unpacked. Sad, because Miss Bolivar was leaving, and sad to see her own dear dolls again. Miss Bolivar helped her take the tissue-paper out carefully. Miss Bolivar loved every one,—even Sally, with her arms and legs off. She liked their names, too, and agreed that three was none too many for each. When they opened the trunk and saw the dresses, she exclaimed in delight:

“Why, Flora! Did you make these? Did you make all these lovely dresses? And you, only nine years old? And every bit by hand, too!”

Flora’s cheeks flushed and her eyes glowed. It was nice to have Miss Bolivar admire them so much. Miss Bolivar came from the city, and she knew such a lot. She knew about clothes, too, and whether they were stylish. Flora trembled with excitement, as she watched her lift them up one at a time, and examine all the stitches and seams and hems. Flora beamed at her astonishment.

“You love your dolls, don’t you, dear? I can tell from the way these dresses are made. So much loving, tender care has gone into them. That’s why they are so beautiful. But why didn’t you want the new doll, and why do you keep the old ones put away so carefully?”

Miss Bolivar’s arm was around her, and somehow it wasn’t so hard to say, after all. Before she realized it, she had told the whole story about putting

Flora Herself

her dolls away forever and giving up the idea of being a dressmaker for good and all. Miss Bolivar was sure to understand. It was all Miss Heckle's fault, because she thought a girl of nine was too big.

It was Miss Bolivar who straightened things out. Miss Heckle probably had something else on her mind and didn't mean it at all. Yes, even Sunday-School teachers say things they don't mean. People say many things to children that they don't mean. Because they have their minds on something else, new hats, for instance. Mother was right. Mother is always right. There's one thing to remember all your life long, you can always depend on everything Mother says, for Mother is always a little girl's best friend. Nine is the best time of all, then ten, and eleven, and twelve, and even on up to fifteen, like Mother. *You're never too old to play with dolls, if you love them!* It must be true if Miss Bolivar said so. It must be true if Miss Bolivar and Mother both said so! It must be true! *It was true!*

And then good-by to Miss Bolivar. Beautiful Miss Bolivar with the silken, rustling skirts, and the lace handkerchief under her belt. A bunch of yellow roses from the bush in the front yard, for a parting gift. A damp handkerchief around the stems to keep them fresh and keep them from pricking. Yes, she promised faithfully to come back again. And soon, too! Good-by . . . oh, good-by. . . . What would life be without Miss Bolivar! . . .

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

But, there was Mother still. . . .

And the beautiful, jointed doll with the natural curly hair needed some new underwear the very first thing!



CHAPTER VIII

NEIGHBORS



*Neighbors sit on
Porches, rocking;
Neighbors walk in
Without knocking.*

*Neighbors smell our
Cabbage cooking;
Know what's for dinner,
Without looking.*

*Neighbors borrow
Sugar, butter;
Neighbors hear each
Word we utter.*

*Neighbors see us
Fight and quarrel;
Do be careful—
That's the moral.*

Chapter VIII

NEIGHBORS



It has been said before that Mr. Baxter liked to take people's pictures. And the most thrilling part of getting a new dress in the Baxter house was having your picture taken afterwards. Mother often said the family would soon have to move out of house and home if Father kept on buying "plates." The cellar was full of them, the attic was full of them, the pantry was full of them, that is, the top shelves, and the woodshed was nearly full, but not quite. Father used the pantry for a "dark-room" for developing and printing. It was very dark and very handy, but not so convenient if it was time to get supper, and a kettle was needed quickly. It was a good thing Father could lock himself in, or many of his pictures would have been spoiled in the interests of getting supper. But to go back to the plates. Mother said that if the family ever moved again, she intended to have a hole dug in the back field as big as

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

the house, and bury them all, because *not a single one of them* was going along!

Then Father would grin and say, "Let's stay here forever! I hate moving anyhow!"

Of course, the pictures were not all of the children. Father was not quite as foolish as that. He got his start in photography by taking pictures of the children when they were little, with a little camera, and then he exchanged the little camera for a larger one, and kept on taking pictures. By this time, he was ready to branch out in other directions. The children were abandoned in favor of snow-scenes, and cows wading in brooks. Then about the time he and Mother went to New Orleans to see the Mardi Gras, he had to have a little bigger and better camera to take pictures of the floats in the parade. So he got the habit of exchanging his cameras pretty often, and they got bigger and bigger, and the tripods got stronger and longer.

The first pictures were very simple ones,—Ella standing looking at a flower, Ned building blocks on the parlor floor, or Milly holding a watch to her ear to make her sit still,—simple, harmless things like that. But then the family moved to Pleasantville, which was quite a small town. Whenever people came to call, Mother passed around the latest photographs for them to see. There were usually some of them sitting on the mantelpiece. Of course, they all admired them very much, and it was not

Neighbors

long until Father started taking pictures of the neighbors and people in town. It was quite a novelty, because people had only had their tintypes taken before that, and real photographs, printed on Velox and mounted on cards were a decided improvement. Father soon became very popular, and his photographs were spread about in every home for miles and miles around,—quite as common as Singer Sewing-Machines. Father held an important place as the only photographer in the vicinity.

Many people came to have their pictures taken. At first, Father just used a sheet behind them, or maybe Grandma's gray shawl, but one day he sent away and bought a real backdrop! How excited the children were when he fastened the roll up to the roof of the porch, and then untied it and let it roll down slowly! A chorus of "Ohs" and "Ahs" went up. They were deeply impressed by the flowing fountain and the flowers and the foliage, and began to quarrel about who would have his picture taken in front of it first, until Mother settled it by sending them all to bed.

It was the Smeezles who were the lucky ones and got the backdrop first. They came on Saturday afternoon, all dressed up spick-and-span. Mrs. Smeezle's hat had red roses and an ostrich plume, and the skirt of her new silk dress had seventeen gores and a circular flounce. Mr. Smeezle's collar was new and looked as if it would choke him. All

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

the little Smeezles were dressed up in their best, too. There were so many of them that Father had a hard time getting them all arranged and Mother had to come out to help him. It was especially difficult because they insisted upon having the fountain show, too.

Flora and Milly were out under the sweet-apple tree, watching.

Every time Mother thought she had them all fixed, and Father ducked his head under the black cloth, they would begin to wiggle and squirm, and one or two of them begin to fight. And then the fountain would be lost to view. Father was ready to give up in despair, but Mother whispered to him to be patient.

Altogether it was a very exciting afternoon, not so much because the backdrop was new, but because Willie Smeezle tried to put his head through it! Poor Father! No one could blame him for getting angry! And no one could blame little Willie, either, because he, poor child, had never seen a backdrop in his life, and how was he to know that it was very new and very expensive and very precious? Photography and backdrops meant nothing to little Willie. *He* had not been brought up in that kind of an atmosphere. He probably thought it was clothes on the line, if he thought anything about it at all.

Anyhow, just about the time that Mother thought

Neighbors

she had the whole family arranged, and Father was standing ready, with the bulb in his hand, telling the children to watch for "the birdie" to pop out of the box, little Willie screamed and jumped and said his brother Johnny was pinching him. His mother set him up straight again, and told Johnny to stop. Father called to Flora to come and play peek-a-boo at him from behind the camera. Flora and Milly had been watching it all from under the sweet-apple tree.

But Willie was not interested in peek-a-boo or having his picture taken or anything else. He just couldn't forget that pinch or Johnny standing behind him. He sat still just long enough for Father to squeeze the bulb and say, "There! That's over!" and then he made a dash for Johnny. But Johnny saw him coming just in time to get out of the way, and that's how Willie happened to stumble over a chair and go head-first through the backdrop. Just under the fountain, too.

No amount of being sorry, of course, could mend that hole, so Mother had to do it. And always after that somebody had to stand or sit in front of the seam, so that it wouldn't show in the photograph. In spite of the hole, though, the backdrop was popular. Especially with newly-married couples. The bride could sit and the groom could stand, or *vice versa*.

The Baxters' nearest neighbors were Mrs. Giffen,

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

or Ma Giffen, as everybody called her, and her unmarried daughter, Katie. They were good neighbors, always handy to borrow from, in case something ran short, although Mother did not approve of borrowing, with the grocery so handy and so many children about. Still, it was comfortable to have good neighbors. Katie came over every day to get water from the Baxters' well, because they only had a cistern. Katie was a grown-up young lady, with her hair on her head, *years* older than even Ella, and she taught a class in Sunday School. Ma Giffen was very quiet, and never had much to say.

Katie had a beau who came to see her every day and kept her grass cut. His name was Wally Cook and he kept a little candy and ice-cream store on Main Street. When the Baxters first moved to Pleasantville, they all thought Wally and Katie would be getting married soon. And whenever Father happened to be taking pictures on the back porch, and Katie happened to be coming over to the pump to get her bucket filled with water, Father would tease her and ask her if she was going to be next. It was always the habit for newly-married couples to have their pictures taken, as soon as the wedding was over. But Katie would laugh and say, "Never you mind!"

It went on for years. Wally came so often, and the children got to know him so well, that he seemed

Neighbors

almost as much of a neighbor as Katie and Ma. And the way he kept her grass cut and trimmed was an example to all the people in the neighborhood. He wouldn't let her help, either. She usually wore her second-best dress and sat in the hammock and watched him, or in the rocker on the porch with Ma and read the evening paper. When Wally got done he came up and sat on the porch steps at her feet, to cool off. Then she put her paper down and they talked.

Wally got to be a special friend of Milly's. If Wally was there when Katie needed a bucket of water, Wally came over and got it for her. Very often, Milly happened to be waiting at the pump, to show him her doll or just talk to him. Sometimes he took her for a ride on his back,—piggy back. Ever since Wally found Milly, when she got lost at the Fair, Wally claimed her for his special friend. He never cared much for the other children. As for Milly,—no one dared to say anything against Wally, if Milly was around. Perhaps the candy in his pockets had something to do with it.

One time, on a rainy evening when it was too wet to cut the grass, Wally called as usual. The front door was closed, so he went up and knocked. Ned happened to be hunting for his ball, under the peony bush by the fence. He glanced up, took just one look, and ran into the house as fast as his legs would take him.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

“Gee!” he announced, “guess what I saw!”

The assembled family had not the slightest idea.

“I saw Wally kiss Katie right through the screen door!”

The family shrieked with laughter. Grandma dropped a stitch in her knitting, Mother dropped the dishpan and spilled the water all over the floor, and Father dropped his cigar and burned a hole in the rug. Ella said they'd probably be getting married soon, and Jerry said he was going to the belling. Flora said surely the screen door wouldn't taste good, and Milly said she didn't believe it. Then they all began to doubt, and Jerry jumped on Ned and began to pound him to make him tell the truth. But Ned slipped out from under him and ran to the barn to hide. A long discussion followed, and it ended up with the conclusion that Ned had made it up to get the family excited.

Of course, there wasn't much that Wally could do, without some of the children seeing. When there are five lively children in a family, there's not much going on in the vicinity that's missed. One child or another is usually on hand. If not Ned, then Milly or Jerry or Flora was sure to notice things.

It was a good thing, too, in a way. Especially the time that old Mr. Hinger's horse ran off with him in his spring wagon, and bumped into the maple tree in front of the Baxters' house. It happened at

Neighbors

a time when nobody was out on their front porches, as most of the mothers were inside getting dinner. It was Ned this time, too. He was hunting sparrows up on the roof. He got so scared when he saw Mr. Hinger thrown out into the road that he couldn't climb down. He just hung on to the roof and screamed for Mother as loud as he could. Mother knew at once that something was the matter. She said she could always tell by the tone of voice. It was Mother who found Mr. Hinger and sent Jerry to tie up his horse, which was standing in the middle of the road in a daze from having hit the tree so hard. By that time, Ned had found his legs again and climbed down from the roof. Mother sent him for the doctor and Mr. Hinger's life was saved.

So it seemed a good thing to have children around handy, to notice what was going on. Which brings us back to Wally and Katie, again.

Katie may not have liked to have so many children next-door always watching. But if they watched her, they did no worse than she and her mother did. For there was nothing that the Baxters did, without being watched by Ma or Katie or both. Father said they had a free circus to enjoy all the time. And Mother said the best plan would be to live on a large farm with the house exactly in the middle, so the next-door neighbors would be over the next hill at least.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Mother never liked the way that Katie walked in at the back door without knocking. People do not do that in cities like Smithfield, and Mother had lived in a city all her life. When the family moved from there, it was one of the hardest things that Mother had to endure and get used to. And you cannot lock your doors in a small town, either, or people will think you are queer.

One time, Katie walked right into the kitchen on a Saturday afternoon, when Mother was giving Flora and Milly their baths in the tin tub. They had pulled the shades down tight, so nobody could *look* in, but that must have only made Katie curious, and she came in to see what was going on. Flora nearly *died*. Milly ran and hid under the table. Mother did not say a word, but she must have looked astonished, for, after one look, the door closed again with a snap, and Katie vanished.

Every Saturday afternoon afterwards, Mother *locked the door*. And after that, Katie knew what the blinds were pulled down for. At least, she never walked in again,—on Saturdays. But she kept on doing it on all other days of the week.

Then Katie had another unpleasant habit. Whenever the children were having their pictures taken on the back porch or in the back yard, she always stood out in her yard, and watched them, with a silly smile on her face. It was very awkward, when Ella was trying to look her best, or when Flora and

Neighbors

Milly were trying to think up ways of having this picture different from the last one,—to know that Katie was looking on and making fun. No one could look her best under such circumstances. And whenever Wally happened to be there, they both stood behind the plum tree and giggled. And more than that, Ma was usually peeking out from behind the curtains in whichever window happened to be nearest. And worst of all, one time, when a very wonderful bride and groom came that no one knew,—not even Katie and Ma,—they both peeked round the corner of the summer kitchen, and stared as plain as day. And the bride and groom saw them, too!

Of course, it had been going on so long, that the family had gotten used to it, and Mother always said they didn't mean anything by it. So if Ned happened to see Wally kiss Katie,—screen door or no screen door,—it only evened things up. After the success of Ned's story, he kept a strict lookout to see what he could see. But the trouble was, there never was anything to see. So, no doubt, the screen-door kiss was only made up, after all.

Katie had a cat whose name was Dewey. When she wanted him to come, she didn't call "Kitty, Kitty!" like other people,—she whistled for him. She didn't like it much when the boys copied her whistle and tried to keep Dewey shut up in the barn. But there was nothing to worry about, be-

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

cause Dewey was a very smart cat and could easily tell an imitation whistle from a real one. Besides, he liked Katie much better than he did the boys, who only teased him. Then, too, Joe Bill was a good match for Dewey, and after their first fight, Dewey kept to his own side of the fence.

Things went on in this way for years. Katie came over twice a day, rain or shine, for water, and sometimes three times a day in hot weather. And Wally came to see her every evening. On Sunday afternoons, they went for a buggy-ride in the country, in a rig hired from the livery stable. In the winter time, they sat around the base-burner with their feet up to keep warm, and read *Parks' Floral Magazine*. Wally helped her order her flower seeds for spring. Once Flora went over on a winter evening to borrow some Castoria for Milly who was sick. She had to make a full report to the family when she got back. But there was nothing exciting to report. Wally and Katie were picking out seeds from *Parks' Floral Magazine*, and Ma was sitting back in the corner knitting, and not paying any attention. Ma got the Castoria for her off the mantelpiece. That was all, absolutely. Not another thing happened.

Things went on like this for years. At least, it seemed endless years to the children. They got so used to Katie and Wally that they forgot that they were not married.

Neighbors

Of course, since Mr. Baxter was the preacher, he was especially interested in weddings. He often joked with Wally and asked him how much longer he would have to wait. But Wally and Katie kept on in the same old way, and nothing happened. Everybody in town got used to it, so gradually even the teasing and the joking stopped.

Then, suddenly, one day, the Baxter family got excited!

At the breakfast table, Father said, "Guess who is going to get married to-day!"

Mother guessed George Simpkins and Jenny Piper, who had been going together long enough, but Father said no. Ella guessed Nate Jenkins and Allie Thompson, but Father said no. Mother mentioned all the couples she could think of, but Father said no each time, and looked very mysterious.

Finally, Ned jumped up and said, "I bet it's Wally and Katie!"

The children all laughed at the good joke. Father said, "Guess again!" and looked more mysterious than ever.

Mother and Ella gave the parlor a good cleaning that morning. Flora and Milly took their seats on the stairsteps in good time. The stairway was very convenient the way it turned round upon itself, right by Father's study door. From one special step about three-fourths of the way up, it was possible to look through the study-door transom, and across

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

through the parlor-door transom, and see whatever was going on in the parlor, as plain as day. This was Flora's and Milly's favorite seat for weddings. It was a very handy place, as it was only about four steps from the top, and this made it easy to get to the bedroom upstairs, in case they had to make their escape.

On this particular day, they did not have to wait long. The door bell rang, they heard a lot of talking in the study, and then they saw people in the parlor. The bride had an Alice-blue satin dress on, with a bustle and a slight train that dragged on the floor. Her hat had pink plumes on it. The brim was so wide, the girls couldn't see her face from their bird's-eye viewpoint. The groom was out of their line of vision. Once Flora got a glimpse of a man with shiny hair, all slicked back, and she whispered to Milly, "There's a man with a black mustache! Who can it be? It must be the groom!"

There were one or two other people in the parlor, too, but the girls couldn't see them. They were dressed in ordinary clothes, anyhow, so it made no difference. While the ceremony was going on, they sat very still. Once, Milly began to whisper, but just then she noticed Father's eye traveling transomward, his lips moving and the pages turning all the while, so she stopped whispering. Pretty soon, it was all over. Weddings are the shortest things, not one-tenth as long as funerals. They could tell

Neighbors

that it was all over because they saw Father close up his book, and hold out his hand to shake hands with somebody. Father was facing the transom the whole time, while the bride and groom had their backs to it. Then Mother stepped up, to kiss the bride.

She lifted up her head and Flora got a glimpse under her hat.

"Why, it's Katie!" she almost shouted.

Milly said, "Oh, I don't believe it, and you mustn't talk so loud, or they'll see us. You can't tell who it is at this distance, and besides, the glass in the transom is dirty and needs a washing."

"It's Katie, as sure as you are alive!" whispered Flora vehemently.

"But Wally hasn't got a black mustache," Milly objected, "so I don't believe it."

"Maybe he grew one to get married in," Flora suggested, but Milly refused to be taken in.

"Well, we'll see, when they have their pictures taken," Flora whispered.

They knew that pictures were to be taken because Father had spent a long time that morning in the pantry dark-room, putting in plates, and also on the porch, putting up the backdrop. Besides, it wouldn't be a wedding without taking a picture of the bride and groom.

So while the wedding party was still busy talking in the parlor, the girls slipped down the steps as

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

quiet as mice, and went out in the back yard to get settled in a good place to watch. They couldn't decide where to go.

Flora said, "Well, if it's only Katie and Wally, I don't see why we have to hide. They've stood and watched us millions of times having *our* pictures taken. Just 'cause they're getting married doesn't make any difference."

"But it isn't Katie," insisted Milly, "because Wally has not got a black mustache. And you know, Father says we're *not to be seen* when a wedding is going on. So I think the tree's the best place!"

So up they climbed into the sweet-apple tree, where they could see without being seen. Just in time, too, for in another moment the wedding party came out. The first thing Flora saw was Ma, all dressed up in her Sunday black with a new bonnet on.

"There's Ma!" she whispered. "Didn't I tell you it was Katie?"

"Keep still," said Milly, "they'll hear us!"

Then came Katie. It *was* Katie! And the Alice-blue satin dress belonged to Katie! And the pink plumes belonged to Katie! And the bustle! Milly had to admit it, although she looked as if she couldn't believe her eyes! *Katie was the bride, after all!*

There were some other strange people and they all stood around and talked and laughed, while Father got his camera fixed. And there was Jerry



A strange man with a
black mustache came
forward.

Neighbors

looking out of the upstairs window, and Ella peeping out from behind the backdrop!

Then Milly whispered, "Where's Wally? I don't see Wally!"

"Maybe he's inside the house combing his hair and brushing the dandruff off his collar," suggested Flora.

"*Why doesn't he come out?*" whispered Milly desperately.

And then before Flora could think up any more explanations, Father said, "All right!" and A STRANGE MAN with a black mustache came forward and took his place in front of the fountain with his hand on Katie's shoulder.

"Who's that?" asked Milly.

They both stared.

"WHO ON EARTH IS THAT?" asked Milly, and this time she completely forgot where she was and *said it out loud!*

"Sh! Sh!" Flora whispered, for she saw Father look around and she knew what that meant.

Milly was so excited her foot slipped and if Flora had not happened to grab her round the waist, she might have fallen and spoiled the wedding picture. But she held on, and found a place for her foot again. Luckily, the man with the black mustache said something funny at just the right time, and in the laugh that followed nobody heard Milly.

The little girls watched with staring eyes. Beau-

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

tiful Katie! How lovely she looked! How nice to get married and have pink plumes and a train! No other bride could compare with Katie! Others were lovely, but Katie was the loveliest! But where did the man with the black mustache come from?

It wasn't until the wedding party was gone and Father had cleared up the porch and put everything away, that the two little girls came down from the sweet-apple tree.

"Why wasn't Wally there?" demanded Milly. "How could Katie get married without Wally?"

"Why, Katie's got married to somebody else, *not* to Wally," Flora explained. "Katie's married that strange man with the black mustache, don't you see? That's why they had their picture taken together."

"I don't believe it," said Milly, and she began to cry.

She wouldn't believe it even when Father and Mother told her at the supper table that it was true, and that the name of the man with the black mustache was Mr. Eugene Spindler, and that he was a Men's Clothing Store man from Banksville. She wouldn't believe it even when Mother let her and Flora sit up at the window for the belling and watch Katie and the strange man pass out ice-cream and cake to the crowd on the front porch.

"But why didn't she marry Wally?" she kept asking Mother. But Mother couldn't seem to find an answer.

Neighbors

By the time the bride and groom got back from their trip to Niagara Falls, Milly had gotten used to the idea, and felt a little better about it. Especially when Katie's strange husband brought her and Flora each a beautiful shell pincushion, with "Souvenir of Niagara Falls" printed on it in gold letters, and a bag of peanuts, besides.

It was funny how everybody sort of forgot about Wally. Nobody seemed to notice much when he closed up his ice-cream and candy store and left town. Only Milly kept on talking about him, because he had always liked her so much. And Milly always insisted that Katie married the strange man by mistake.

The strange man came to live next-door with Katie and Ma, right after the wedding trip. But his Men's Clothing business kept him in Banksville all week long, so he could only come home to stay over Saturday and Sunday each week. Katie had to carry her own water all through the week. And it took him all Saturday afternoon and evening to get the grass cut!



CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST AUTO



*Autos like gas,
Horses like hay;
Autos can snort,
Horses can neigh.*

*Autos have blow-outs,
Then need a patch;
Horses run off, but
Are easy to catch.*

*'Autos go fast,
Unless they go slow;
'Horses are best,
Wherever you go.*

Chapter IX

THE FIRST AUTO



OTHER liked horses very much. She said she would never be without a horse, no matter what the paper said about "horseless carriages" taking their place. Mother said it was all nonsense. A horse cannot

break down like a machine, and when you want to go somewhere, you want something that you can depend upon. Ben could drive to Banksville in fifty minutes, and that was eight miles. May Frost said it took her father two hours to come from Mercer in his new auto, and that was only six miles away. Mother said it would be a long time before any one could invent something that could beat a good, reliable, old horse, and Mother ought to know. Flora agreed with Mother.

Mr. Frost bought the first automobile in town, but he called it "auto" for short.

One day Mother and Ella were upstairs in the front room sewing. Ella was getting a new dress.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Flora and Milly were sitting on the floor, sewing for their dolls, and begging for scraps. Mother had given Milly a left-over piece of lace about five inches long, and Flora was helping her to decide how to trim Beauty's calico dress with it.

All of a sudden, they heard a funny chug-chugging in the street and shouts from a crowd of people. They ran to the window and looked. Mother, at her sewing-machine, said, "It sounds like a well-driller or a threshing-machine!"

"Oh, Mother, come and look!" cried Milly. "It's a buggy without a horse, and it's going all by itself!"

"And there's May Frost, getting a ride with her father!"

"What do you s'pose makes it go?"

In another moment, they all ran down the stairs and banged the front screen door behind them, Ponto at their heels. As they came through the gate, there was a still louder chug, then a puff and a bang, and there it was,—stopped right by the Baxters' telephone pole. Ponto stayed inside the fence and barked.

Everybody in town was following it. When it stopped, they made a big crowd, and more were coming every minute. Mr. Frost and May were sitting high up on the seat in front, looking very important.

It was the funniest looking thing! Something like a piano-box buggy with no shafts . . . no top, no

The First Auto

whip, no dashboard . . . no lines to drive, only a wheel to turn, and a funny horn with a rubber thing to squeeze . . . enormous rubber tires, ten times as big as bicycle tires . . . wings over each, splattered with mud on the under side . . . lamps on each side, just like a buggy! And, last of all,—painted bright red! The whole thing bright red! That was the funny part! Who ever heard of painting a buggy bright red?

Mr. Frost got out, took off his cap and goggles, and seemed to be a little bit worried, although he smiled at the people and told them there was nothing the matter at all.

Everybody had something to say, of course. Nothing had ever happened like this before.

Mrs. Smeezle was there, with two or three little Smeezles, and said, "Land sakes, ain't it grand?" to everybody near her.

Bill Barker and Perry Hogan, who were friends of Jerry's, asked all kinds of questions about what made her go, and what'd she cost, and won't you gimme a ride.

Mr. Frost opened up the front part of her and took a look at her insides. Then he told May to get down off the seat. He lifted it up and got out some screws and wrenches and things, and went to work to fix up whatever was wrong with the insides. He was thinking so hard about what he was doing, that he didn't have time to answer any questions.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Grandpa Peebles got so excited he let his cane fall, pushed his glasses up on his forehead, and kept saying over and over, "Wall, I never! Wall, I never saw the beat of that!"

Mrs. Purdy and Mrs. Cozzens, who were always such good friends, had a great time laughing over something funny between themselves. All the children crowded around May. Some of them felt of her veil and duster to see what they were made of. They asked her a great many questions, to which she kept on answering, in her squeaky, high-pitched voice, "Oh, it was wonderful, *wonderful!*"

After a few minutes, Mr. Frost closed her up in front, put the cushion back on the front seat, and helped May climb up to her seat again. Then he took a crooked piece of iron and wound her up in front, and that made her start buzzing again, so he jumped in and took his place at the wheel.

"Get out of the way, everybody!" yelled Bill Barker, and everybody ran to the sidewalk.

"Better not run over nobody!" growled crusty old Joe Peck.

The crowd stood back and the auto grunted, chugged a little, then gurgled, sputtered and stopped. The people stood back and looked surprised. Nobody said a word.

Mr. Frost got out and wound her up again. She started again, chugging and chugging, louder than ever. And after he had pushed some buttons and

The First Auto

moved some handles and things, she began to go, and everybody cheered.

Half-way down the block she went, the crowd following, everybody cheering. May looked so proud, sitting up so high in front with everybody looking at her, that all the girls envied her.

And then she stopped again!

A bad boy shouted, "Giddap, horsie!" And others chimed in, "Gee!" "Whoa!" "Haw!" But Mr. Frost paid no attention.

He got out again and did the same things over and over, but he couldn't seem to get her wound up. He tinkered and tinkered, until the mothers all had to leave to go home and get dinner, and most of the men got tired and went back to their chairs in front of the livery stable. Only the children stayed, and even they had to go when their mothers called to them to come home because dinner was on the table.

As Flora and Milly turned in at the gate and looked down the street, they noticed that May did not look as proud as she did before. She was handing wrenches and things to her father, who was lying on the ground under the auto with only his feet sticking out. She had taken off her hat and her big touring veil. No doubt they were too hot.

While the Baxters were eating dinner, they heard a loud sputtering and then a roar, but Mother made the children stay and finish their dinner. By the

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

time dessert was over and they got out to the street, the auto was gone, so they knew he had gotten her started at last.

The next day at school, May tossed her head and said, "It wasn't any serious trouble at all. We just ran out of 'gas'! She's running fine, now!"

The girls looked at each other doubtfully and a little scared. Then Mamie Reed, who always managed to say the wrong thing, blurted out, "What's 'gas'?"

"Why, don't you know?" asked May, with a superior air. "It's gasoline, of course! That's what makes automobiles go!" The girls looked at each other again. There was no doubt about it,—May was very superior, and they were very ignorant.

Mamie always had an answer to everything, so she said, "Well, I'd rather have a good old horse, than a hundred autos that you can't run, so there!"

To which May replied, more haughty and superior than ever, "You don't call it 'running an auto'! It's 'driving a car'!"

The girls had never heard of "driving" anything but a horse, so they were completely squelched.

May's superiority did not last long, however, because all her friends were against her, so she soon melted. The girls forgot their differences, in their eagerness to be friends again and get the promise of a ride. Poor May had a hard time of it, trying to keep all her promises. Probably her father did

The First Auto

not like the idea of taking all the children in town for a ride.

Fannie Krapp and Mamie Reed and Flora Baxter were May's most intimate friends. The four of them had made up a secret club, just a few months before May's father got the auto. It was not a very exciting club. They didn't have anything particular to do at their meetings,—except to pretend to be very secret, and not let anybody find out what they were talking about. They had vague ideas of sewing for the Orphans' Home or making lemonade to sell, or something like that. But the first and most important thing to do was to think up a name for the club. They decided it must be a name that no one could possibly guess.

It was Flora's idea to call it the F M Club, because Fannie's and Flora's names began with F, and Mamie's and May's both began with M. May thought this was very clever, because it would put people completely off the track. They would be sure to think that F M stood for Frisky Maidens or Funny Monkeys or most anything except what it really stood for. If May approved, it must be a good idea, and Flora was very pleased. She found some old McKinley pins, Be Sure to Vote for McKinley,—the little round ones about as big as a penny, with a pin at the back. She covered them carefully with pink silk, turning the edges under the rim at the back, and marked F M on them in ink.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

At the most important meeting in the Club's whole history, the girls each pinned one on, and wore them to school the next day. What was their dismay, on the very first day, to have Carrie Cook, a big girl in Ella's class in High School, tell them that she knew that the letters stood for their own first names! And she said it right out in front of a whole crowd of school-children at recess, before any one had had time to guess any interesting names for it.

Carrie never was a nice girl, anyhow! What Ella could see in her. . . . Maybe she had found out through Ella! Flora had hidden the pins under her handkerchiefs in the top bureau drawer, and not a soul had seen her making them. Of course, she told Mother all about the club, but then, Mother wouldn't tell, because she knew it was very secret. Ella might have been listening, somewhere. . . . But even Ella would not have told, if she knew it was a secret. No! Carrie Cook must have guessed it out of a clear sky . . . and it was not nice of her to say it out in front of everybody. . . .

That practically ended the club. The girls tried to pretend they didn't care. They went through the motions and held some more secret meetings. They held one under a tree in the orchard, beside the Cooks' house, just so Carrie could see them, and were a little disappointed to find out later that Carrie had gone away to visit her grandmother. After

The First Auto

that, they lost interest in the club and gradually forgot all about it.

But, anyhow, this proved that Fannie and Mamie and Flora were May's most intimate friends. And it was only right that they should have the first rides in her father's auto.

He took them, two at a time, squeezed in beside him. Fannie and Mamie went first. Fannie wore May's hat and veil, and Mamie wore May's duster. But she had to hold her hat on with both hands because she didn't have a veil. May and Flora sat on the Frosts' front porch while they were away. Flora looked at May's stereopticon views. She went through them three times before they got back.

Fannie and Mamie were wild with excitement. Everything went just fine. Not a bit of trouble. Fast as lightning,—down hill. Two miles out and two miles back. Oh, it was wonderful! Much more exciting than a horse!

And then it was May's and Flora's turn. May let Flora wear her veil, and she put on her mother's goggles and the duster. May sat in the middle, next to her father, and Flora sat very close to the edge. She didn't have a buggy-top to hold onto, either. There was very little room for her feet.

Flora was never so frightened in her life! She wanted to call to Mr. Frost not to go so fast, but she couldn't make a sound. She felt as if she had swallowed her voice. May had one arm around

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Flora's waist. Flora had to sit forward, in order to make room enough for May. She felt as if she were sitting on the edge of a precipice, like the picture in the Geography book, with her legs dangling over. A vague thought ran through her mind of a funny story that Mother used to tell about Great-aunt Susie, who used to ride in a carriage, holding the door open, and one foot out, ready to jump! Flora understood it as never before. But it wasn't funny. How could Mother think it was funny? It was terrible. And this was a hundred times worse than any carriage. You couldn't jump from this without being killed. If only it had a door, to be kept shut, to hold you in . . . or a top to hold onto. . . . Maybe May isn't holding tight enough . . . what if she should let go . . . going around a corner, or over a stone. . . .

Flora never knew the roads were so stony. The auto seemed to scatter stones to the right and left and leave a trail behind them, as they sped along. No, not stones, but rocks! Why didn't somebody take the rocks out of the road? Flora never knew the road was so bumpy. Great, huge bumps for autos to bump over, and make people on the seat bounce up and down like a rubber ball!

Mr. Frost took the street in front of May's house, then turned the corner into Main Street. May told Flora to wave to all the people who came running out to see. But Flora was so frightened,

The First Auto

she held on as tight as she could, and did not look up for fear of getting dizzy. She was apt to get dizzy easily, anyhow. She vaguely heard people shouting hello, and then, before she knew it, they were in the country.

After a while, she got used to the jiggling and opened her eyes. They were passing the Clark's farmhouse. And that meant that they were on the way to Banksville! She was terrified, for she had a feeling that she would never get back again. Her heart began to thump, and she could hardly keep from crying. It was a good thing that May was such a steady talker, and never ran out of things to talk about. She was the kind that never wants an answer, so she didn't notice a thing.

They didn't go to Banksville, after all. They only went to the cross-roads beyond the Four-Mile-House. Mr. Frost made the girls get out and stand by the fence while he turned around. It seemed to be very hard work for him, poor man, and Flora wondered why he didn't keep his horse. Horses know how to turn by themselves, without any trouble. All you have to do is pull on one rein, the way you want them to turn. Mr. Frost backed the auto into the ditch several times, but finally got it to go into the cross-road, and then started going forwards again, towards home. Then he stopped for the girls to get in.

May asked Flora how she liked it, and she said

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

it was wonderful, even if she did not think so inside. It would be wonderful if you got used to it.

On the way home, she got her courage up and kept her eyes open all the way. There were quite a lot of hills between town and the Four-Mile-House. When you drive hills with a horse, you let the horse walk up slowly. But when you drive them with an auto, you sometimes have to push the auto up.

It got stuck on the side of a hill, and the girls had to get out and run for stones to put under the wheels, so it wouldn't roll downhill backwards. Something was wrong, and it took Mr. Frost a long time to find out what it was. Many times he got in and out of that auto, and many times he tried to wind her up, and many times he lost his monkey-wrench. It got hotter and hotter, and he took off his goggles and wiped his dripping face. Flora took off May's veil and May took off her mother's goggles. The girls helped as much as they could and Flora got a big spot of grease on her dress. May said it would come out if you rubbed it with lard first, before washing it. May spoke from experience. There was not much to do until the time came to push, and then they couldn't push much, because the auto was too heavy.

May made her father very angry by asking, "Are you sure you are not out of 'gas'?"

It seemed to Flora a very unwise and unnecessary question, considering how hot and tired he was.

The First Auto

After a long time it started, and before they knew it, it was at the top of the hill, and they had had to grab everything that had been laid on the grass and rush after it and jump in again.

They had not gone far, when they saw a horse and spring-wagon, coming down the road towards them. They did not recognize the man who was driving, and his horse did not recognize their auto. They found out afterwards, that it was Jake Becker, who had a pig farm near Mercer. He had just taken a load of pigs to town.

That horse, Jake said afterwards, had always had a nervous disposition, and she thought that horses belonged on buggies, and buggies had no business moving along the road without horses in front. That horse, Jake said, did not have brains enough to understand these highfalutin' new inventions, 'specially when they made wehicles run along the road by theirselves, 'thout bein' pushed or pulled.

Jenny was the horse's name.

Jenny stopped and took just one look at Mr. Frost's new auto. Then she shied, jumped up on her hind legs, and began to dance a jig. Mr. Becker sawed at the reins, and tried to keep her in the road, but she made a dash for the fence, as if she expected to clear it, cross the field and seek safety in the woods.

It all happened so quickly that it was hard to tell what was happening. Flora had seen horses shy

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

before, at threshing machines or hay-loads, but she never saw a horse shy the way Jake Becker's horse shied. Before she knew it, Jenny and Jake and the spring-wagon were all in the ditch, and Mr. Frost was out of the auto and trying to catch hold of Jenny's bridle. Luckily she had blinders on, and she had come completely past the auto, so she couldn't see it even out of the corner of her eye. Mr. Frost patted her on the nose for a while, and finally she calmed down.

The wagon got tipped over, some boxes got dumped off into the ditch, and Mr. Becker's hat got lost, but no real damage was done. Mr. Becker was mad at first, but after Jenny got quiet and took her place in the road with the wagon all straightened up behind her, he cooled off and spent a long time asking Mr. Frost a lot of questions about the auto. When he drove off, he tipped his straw hat to May and Flora with a smile.

Flora was so relieved when Mr. Becker got friendly again that it seemed almost a pleasure to start for home in the auto. She and May laughed and giggled together, and she forgot to be scared. She noticed what a lovely day it was and how many clouds there were in the sky. An auto was not so bad after all. In fact, it was wonderful, just as Flora said. It was all in getting used to it. Mr. Frost slowed up to let a rabbit go by, and the girls were glad he had not run over it. May showed

The First Auto

Flora how to read the Speedometer, and they both held on tight, when it went up to fifteen miles an hour on a smooth stretch.

But their happiness did not last long.

All at once they heard a loud "Pop!" It sounded like the report of a big gun, and Mr. Frost pulled up to see what was wrong.

The back tire was punctured and all the air was out. Mr. Frost said it was the air going out that made the loud pop. It was a tack that did it. Just like Jerry's bicycle, Flora thought. Always getting punctures. What a good thing horses don't get punctures! But she didn't say so. It takes about ten times longer to fix an auto puncture than it takes to fix a bicycle puncture. Whenever Flora rode on Jerry's bicycle and got a puncture, she simply got off and walked home, wheeling the bicycle beside her, to let Jerry or Ned fix it after she got home. But it's not convenient to wheel an auto home.

So the girls sat on a stone by the side of the road, under a big shade tree, and watched Mr. Frost. Poor, poor Mr. Frost! It was such a hot day and he dripped and dripped and tugged and knocked and pounded and unscrewed and screwed and hit and missed and pounded his thumb and, at last, pumped and pumped. It takes long enough to pump up a bicycle tire, but it takes longer to pump up an auto tire. And all the time it got hotter and hotter and Mr. Frost got madder and madder. Especially

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

when a man went by on a load of hay and asked if he couldn't tie the auto on behind and pull it home.

"No, sir!" said Mr. Frost sharply, without even looking up.

Several other people passed and they all had something aggravating to say, and smiled or laughed outright as if they thought it was funny. That might not have been so bad, but Flora knew that Mr. Frost was thinking how they would all go home and tell their neighbors, and everybody in town would find out about his break-down. That thought was enough to make anybody angry, and she did not blame Mr. Frost a bit.

And there was nothing the girls could do to help—nothing but sit still and not say a word. May tried to offer some advice occasionally, but soon got discouraged for her father paid no attention. The stone got hard after a while, so the girls got up and took a walk down the road, and not long after that Mr. Frost called them and they started again.

It was pretty late that afternoon when they got back to town. Supper was over at home, and the family was all out on the front porch, when Mr. Frost came chugging up and stopped long enough for Flora to get out and say thank you. They were all worried for fear there had been an accident and were relieved to see Flora again safe and sound.

It was an exciting tale to tell. All about how far they went and how it felt and was she scared and all

The First Auto

the different things that happened. It was a wonder she got any supper.

At the end, Mother shook her head and said, "A good old horse is good enough for me!"

And Flora agreed with Mother!



CHAPTER X

FLORA AGAIN



*You will have to
Pack your grip,
If you want to
Take a trip.
New umbrella,
Comb and brush,
Sunday shoes,—but
Do not rush!
Brand-new dress of
Cashmere plaid;
Nicest one you've
Ever had.
To the depot,
Say good-by!
Wave your hand, but
Do not cry!*

Chapter X

FLORA AGAIN



BY the time Flora was twelve, she had grown into a very serious little girl. People who saw her for the first time asked her what she was thinking about. She always said, "Oh, nothing!" and ran away for fear

they might pat her on the back or try to tickle her under the chin. Flora hated to be patted on the back, and she hated to be tickled under the chin. Sometimes they remarked about what pretty blue eyes she had, and Flora did not like that, either. Sometimes they said how much she looked like Mother, when Mother was a little girl. It was old friends of Mother's who said that. That was the one thing that made Flora happy. If only she could be like Mother . . . as beautiful as Mother . . . as good as Mother . . . and know as much as Mother. . . .

One day in June, the house was empty, and there was no one to be seen anywhere. Only the clinking of the dishes from the kitchen, and the sound of

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

some one pumping at the well, to fill the pitcher for the table.

The supper bell rang. As if by magic, the family appeared, from various directions. Screen-doors banged, the front one, the back one, the side one. The family sat down to supper, Father at the head, and Mother at the foot,—near the door into the kitchen. Three girls on one side, Ella in the middle. Two boys on the other side, only Ned was late as usual.

"Oh, I don't believe it!"

"Well, it's true! I know what I'm talking about! Phil Barker told me."

"Phil Barker hasn't much sense. How does he know?"

"How does who know what?"

"Well, it's his own uncle, and I guess he ought to know. Phil Barker's uncle in Chicago says they have Moving Pictures there."

"What's that?"

"Pictures that move and come to life and do things just like live people do! It's something like a theater, only they have a big white sheet up, and they have a thing like a Magic Lantern, and they throw a picture on the sheet. And the pictures come to life, and the people move around like real ones!"

"What makes them move?"

"How should I know? Phil's uncle didn't tell him that."

Flora Again

"What next, I wonder?"

"Sounds fishy to me!"

"Well, Phil Barker's uncle saw it with his very own eyes, and he ought to know. . . ."

Just then Ned came bursting in. He banged the door behind him and threw his cap in the corner.

"Say, what are you having supper so early for? I didn't know it was supper time! Just stopped round to get the mail, and there's only one letter. Say, Jerry, there's another puncture. We'd better sell that old bike and buy another. Gosh! I wish we had the money! It's about as good as a threshing-machine, when it comes to speed. . . . Oh, what's that? Oh, the letter. . . . Just wait till I swallow this mouthful. I put it somewhere . . . let's see . . ." and he began to rummage through his pockets.

"Oh, yes, here it is. It's for *Miss Flora Baxter*. Say, I thought nobody could be a Miss till they were twenty-one years old, at least. How does Flora get to be a Miss at her age?"

Everybody looked at Flora as she took the letter. Her hands trembled. She was not in the habit of getting letters. At last she got it out and read it, while the family waited,—each one curious to know what was in it, and who sent it, and where it came from, and what they wanted.

"It's from Miss Bolivar, and she wants to know if I can come and pay her a visit!"

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Miss Bolivar! A trip to Smithfield! How wonderful! And stay as long as possible! A trip on the train alone! And to a big city like Smithfield!

Father said he s'posed she'd be wanting to go round the world next, and Mother laughed and said why not! Ella was thinking about getting ready to go away to College in the fall, so a trip to Smithfield meant nothing to her. Jerry couldn't see why Miss Bolivar was so foolish as to invite a girl, and Ned asked Flora to bring him a new bicycle for a present when she came home. And Milly said, "I'll just die without you!"

Then came the important question of *when*. And Mother decided it would be as soon as the canning was done. There were cherries ready to be picked and canned, and there must be some strawberry preserves before the strawberries were all gone. Can't possibly get through the winter, otherwise. Flora could help gather the strawberries and seed the cherries. . . . The trip could be a reward. . . . Then it would take about three days for the sewing. A China silk dress, from the goods that Aunt Emma sent, and that old spring coat of Ella's could be made smaller. . . . What a good thing Mother had gotten the summer sewing done early, and there were those three new gingham dresses, hardly worn at all,—only one of them washed once. . . .

The next day, the boys picked cherries, and the girls went off down the railroad track for wild straw-

Flora Again

berries. Afterwards, Flora sat with Mother and Ella, seeded cherries, hulled strawberries and picked over currants by the hour. But she hardly noticed what she was doing. Her thoughts were on Miss Bolivar and Smithfield. What bliss! Not many girls were so lucky. She hadn't been on a real trip since Father took her and Milly to Michigan, and that was ages ago,—when she was very young, and didn't know much. And now she was going alone, and would have to change cars and everything. . . .

By Saturday afternoon, Mother had put up fifteen quarts of cherries, twenty-five pints of strawberry jam, and what seemed to be hundreds of glasses of jelly. Ella's fingers and Flora's were stained a permanent purple, and the ceiling of the kitchen was sprinkled with red juice from the cherries that squirted. On Saturday morning, Flora cut the jelly papers, Mother spread the white of egg on them, Ella tied the strings around, and then they were done. Nobody who has never lived through a solid week of canning on a coal range, in a hot, hot kitchen with the thermometer above 80, can appreciate what they went through, or know the joyful relief, when it was all over.

After Sunday, there followed three busy days of sewing. Ella and Flora both helped. While Flora was pulling basting threads from the new silk dress, she thought of the time so many years before, when she was so sure she wanted to be a dressmaker!

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

And then how she thought for a long time she wanted to be an artist! Which, she wondered! She didn't know. It was harder to decide now than when she was little. She loved to sew. Mother had taught her how to sew on the sewing-machine, and said she could soon make all her own dresses. She loved to paint. She had taken three prizes at the County Fair last year. Which did she want to be most? Oh, it is so difficult to be getting really and truly Grown Up, and not know what you want to do most. . . .

Just then Jerry interrupted by saying that she'd never be able to cross the streets in a big city like Smithfield. Jerry had been to Columbus once with Father, so he knew all about big cities. The streets were full of street-cars and wagons,—and autos, too, great huge green and purple ones, that went whizzing by like lightning, and never slowed up at all. You have to have a policeman come and take you by the arm to lead you across, and sometimes he *pinches!* Jerry couldn't keep his face straight when he said that, so Flora knew it wasn't true.

He rambled on, "People from the country are apt to get run over when they go to the city, especially when they go alone. . . . And cities are wicked places, with robbers, and thieves, and pick-pockets! They come and take your pocket-book right out of your hand, and all you can do is to say, 'Certainly, you're welcome!' And then they have

Flora Again

gas to burn for lights, only you mustn't blow it out, like you do a lamp, 'cause the gas would keep on comin' and comin' out, and first thing you know you'd be snufficated! Yes-sirree! And that reminds me, you won't have any lamps to fill for Miss Bolivar, Flora! Think of that!"

Just then Mother came in. She heard the last sentence and said, "That reminds *me*, Jerry! While Flora's away, I think *you* can fill the lamps for her and clean the chimneys,—you like to do it so well! Don't forget, now!"

"Wow!" cried Jerry. "Just my luck! How did I happen to mention it?"

Ella and Flora began to laugh. Filling and cleaning the lamps was the one chore that everybody hated,—but Jerry most of all. What a good joke on Jerry!

Flora asked Mother if it was true about the crowded streets and not being able to cross over and about the thieves and bad men in a city. And Mother said for her not to listen to Jerry's nonsense. Jerry was only teasing. Smithfield wouldn't be much different from Pleasantville, only a little bigger, and she would see all of Mother's dear old friends and be with Miss Bolivar. . . . And she must never forget that Mother had been very happy there, and Mother loved Smithfield dearly.

Father bought Flora a new pocket-book of bright blue leather, with a snap; and inside he put a card

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

with her name and address and "Please notify" on it. The family took her to the train and they all waved good-by. It was lonely, at first, and she thought of that first trip when the family moved to Pleasantville. It was so long ago. She was so little then. And Milly got sick. Trains never did agree with Milly. But now, she was older, and more sensible, and able to travel alone. There was nothing to cry about, because she would soon get off and see Miss Bolivar,—beautiful Miss Bolivar, with her silken, rustling skirts. She was old enough now to travel alone . . . twelve years old. . . . That's getting very near to Grown Up. But before she got to eighteen, or even before fifteen, she would have to decide one important question. Which did she want to be most, a dressmaker or an artist?

She knew just what she must do. Not talk to strangers. Not buy anything from the man who went through selling candy in a basket. Not lean on the window-sill, if it was covered with soot. But she could take her hat off if she wanted to. And her coat if it was too hot. And there was her lunch in an old writing-paper box. And there was the last *Youth's Companion* to read. . . . Oh, yes, and her ticket. Yes, it was safe and sound. And the three silver dollars, too. She closed the pocket-book with a snap, and patted the beautiful blue leather tenderly. The conductor would come for her ticket soon. And she must ask him to be sure

Flora Again

and tell her when to change cars and where to go when she got off, to get the other train. And not drink any water on the train . . . but how hot it was, and how thirsty she was getting. . . .

The conductor was very kind, helped her off the train, lifted her suit-case down, and pointed to the other train, right on the next track. "As plain as the nose on your face," he said. What a funny thing to say! Nothing hard about finding the train or climbing on. Soon she was on her way again, and looking out of the window for Smithfield. Before she knew it, she was there. It didn't take half as long as the time when she was six.

And there was Miss Bolivar on the platform waiting. Beautiful Miss Bolivar! She had not changed a bit. Still dressed in silks, and her silks still rustled. How easy to take a trip, even if you are alone. How nice to be met by Miss Bolivar. How nice to be going to stay two weeks!

And Miss Bolivar said that Flora had not changed a bit, either. Only a little taller, but still the same. She took her suit-case with one hand and with the other took Flora by the arm. Together they walked to the corner to get on a street-car. The streets were *not* so crowded. You did *not* have to have a policeman to help you across. She must write and tell Jerry he was wrong. And then a great, big thing came rumbling along. Something like an auto, but much bigger,—“huge,” like Jerry said. Some-

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

thing like a big farm wagon without horses. She stood and stared. Miss Bolivar set the suit-case down. The big thing was filled with boxes in the back. Miss Bolivar said it was a "truck,"—an automobile truck! How big it was, almost as big as a freight car! But it wasn't green and purple, and it went so slowly, it barely crawled. She must remember to tell Jerry.

And then the ride on the street-car. Flora had never had a ride on one before. She didn't know what to do, so she just followed Miss Bolivar, and they went inside and sat down. How funny to have seats along the side, instead of in rows! How could you see out, with your back to the window? You had to twist your neck. How far you had to twist it! And then she noticed that she was the only one in the car who was twisting her neck. All the other city people were sitting still and staring straight ahead! They didn't want to see out of the window. Or, if they did, they looked across the aisle, through the *opposite* window. You couldn't see half so well that way. She must tell the family about this, too.

And then the conductor came around and said, "Fares, please!" Flora jumped and began to fumble in the new blue leather pocket-book, but Miss Bolivar said, "Never mind, dear," and gave the man two little white tickets.

In another moment, she said, "The next street is

Flora Again

ours, Flora!" and Flora clutched her suit-case. Miss Bolivar got up, and Flora followed,—but the street-car had not stopped! Miss Bolivar walked to the front of the car. Where was she going? Flora tried to follow, but the car jiggled, and she couldn't help bumping the suit-case into people's knees. And then she dropped her pocket-book! Why didn't the street-car stop? By this time, Miss Bolivar was far ahead. Flora bent over and reached and grabbed madly. . . . A man was standing and leaning, holding onto a strap. Somehow, the pocket-book got on the other side of his legs. Somebody would *take* it,—some bad pickpocket! She musn't lose Miss Bolivar. . . . She mustn't get left behind, in such a large city. . . .

The street-car slowed up, lurched once or twice, and finally stopped. The suit-case was heavy and in the way. There was no place to put it, and Miss Bolivar was getting off without her. And then she stumbled over somebody's feet, and fell! Miss Bolivar was going out the front door. . . . Oh, she must hurry. . . . A kind man picked her up, and the pocket-book. He carried the suit-case after her, and handed it to her after she stepped off. And then he tipped his hat and smiled. How kind of him. *Some* people are kind in big cities. They are not all thieves and bad men like Jerry said!

Miss Bolivar's house was only a short distance from the car line. Flora set her suit-case down on

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

the porch, while Miss Bolivar took out her key and unlocked the door. It was a brick house, with honeysuckle vines growing up over the porch, all in bloom. Only a tiny yard, with room for one flower bed. As they went in, a man in blue came up the walk and put some letters in a little tin box by the side of the door. That was the mail man, Miss Bolivar explained. The house was beautiful inside, too. Dark, mysterious rooms with a pleasant odor.

Miss Bolivar took Flora up to the spare room, and kissed her on the cheek. She told her to take off her things and make herself at home, and the bathroom was the first door on the right. Then she went downstairs again. Flora took off her hat and coat, and sank into a chair. How tired she was. She didn't know she was so tired. The chair was big and wide and soft and comfortable. She leaned back and surveyed the room. A bunch of sweet-peas in a glass vase on the bureau . . . a long, round pillow with a tassel at the end. It looked hard to sleep on. Pillow and all covered with lace . . . how wonderful to have a bedspread all of lace, but not in our house with boys so rough. . . .

When Miss Bolivar came in a few moments later, she found a little girl sound asleep in the chair. She stole out again quietly, so as not to waken her. Poor child, she needed the rest more than anything.

When Flora woke up, she was frightened to find herself in strange surroundings. But her suit-case

Flora Again

reassured her. She remembered that she was at Miss Bolivar's. She decided to hurry and unpack, for Miss Bolivar must be waiting downstairs and wondering why it took her so long. She hung her dresses up on the hangers in the closet. Then she thought she ought to wash her face and change her dress. She looked around, but there was no wash-bowl and pitcher in the room. Spare rooms always have wash-bowls and pitchers. The worst thing about company is having to keep the pitcher filled. But there wasn't any. How could she wash?

Suddenly she remembered what Miss Bolivar had said about the bathroom and the first door on the right. So she went out to explore. Miss Bolivar heard her footsteps in the hall, and came up to ask her if she had had a good rest. She showed Flora how to light the gas, and explained how to turn on the water, hot or cold, in the basin and the tub. Flora had never seen a shiny white tub before. It would be hard to go back to the old tin one at home!

How wonderful it was to live in the city and have bath-tubs and street-cars and lace bedspreads and a mail man to bring your letters right to the door. How different it **was to** live in the city. No wonder Mother loved it and didn't want to move away. What a lot of new things to be seen and done. What a lot of things to write home about in letters. The family would want to know everything.

Then Miss Bolivar took her into her own room

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

and showed her the painting of the yellow roses that she had given her when she was nine. What a long time ago, and the painting was pretty bad, even if Miss Bolivar did like it.

That night Flora helped Miss Bolivar get supper and wash the dishes, and they talked and visited. Flora had to tell all about the family, who had their pictures taken lately, and what was Father's latest hobby, and what was Mother doing to keep out of mischief. Then Miss Bolivar said, since she had many plans for the next two weeks, the best way to start was to go to bed early on the first night.

The next morning, Flora slept late, and when she came down breakfast was ready and on the table. She took her place opposite Miss Bolivar. How nice to be all alone on a visit to Miss Bolivar. Beautiful Miss Bolivar!

She picked up her spoon, and then she noticed for the first time what was before her. It looked something like an orange, although it was more the color of a lemon. But it was much larger than either. She wondered what it could be. Then she looked and saw Miss Bolivar eating.

"Try it, dear," said Miss Bolivar, smiling. "It's very good! It's called a grape-fruit!"

Flora took a bite but could hardly swallow it. Bitter . . . and yet sweet . . . what a queer taste. But Miss Bolivar was eating hers and she said it was good. Flora remembered the rule at home

Flora Again

about eating whatever was placed on the table, so she kept on, valiantly. Now she could appreciate how Milly felt, when she didn't want to eat her potatoes. Father said Milly was the only person in the world who did not like potatoes. Perhaps Flora was the only person in the world who did not like grape-fruit. . . . What a funny name . . . nothing like grapes at all . . . grapes are good, not bitter.

She kept on and on. At each successive bite, she felt that she couldn't possibly take another. The next one would choke her. What queer things city people eat! But Miss Bolivar was eating hers, and Miss Bolivar liked it. She must be polite when she was away on a visit. Miss Bolivar wouldn't like it if she left half of it uneaten. . . . But why are grape-fruits made so big?

At last, Miss Bolivar came to the rescue and told her she didn't need to finish it. The first grape-fruit is the hardest of all,—it would be easier the next time. After that came cereal and eggs, just like at home,—no trouble at all.

In the afternoon they went to town to "shop." People "shop" in cities, but in small towns they just buy things. They took the street-car again, and Flora felt by this time that she was quite used to it. There were so many beautiful things in the windows of the shops that she was bewildered. She wanted to stand and look at them all day long, but Miss Bolivar

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

kept saying, "Let's go inside," and then the inside was even more fascinating.

Miss Bolivar asked her, "Do you like to sew as much as ever, Flora?"

And Flora said, "More than ever, I think!"

"And how about painting?" asked Miss Bolivar, with a twinkle in her eye.

"Oh, I like to paint as much as ever, too! I can't decide which I like better!"

They went to the embroidery counter, and Miss Bolivar picked out some beautiful linen doilies, one with pansies, one with violets, and one with roses. And Flora chose the silk in skeins to use for the embroidery. When they got back to Miss Bolivar's house, she showed her how to start work on the prettiest one.

"Is it for me, Miss Bolivar?"

"How would you like to embroider it while you are here and take it home for a present for Mother?"

"Oh . . . Miss Bolivar . . . you don't mean it!"

That evening, Miss Bolivar had a party for Flora. All of Mother's old friends came and brought their children. They were all strangers to Flora, but she knew their names, because Father and Mother spoke of them so often. Miss Bolivar had bought a lavender Autograph Book for Flora, and everybody wrote their names in it. There was Punch to



"Now that I am
twelve. . . ."

Flora Again

drink in a big glass bowl. Somebody brought a Phonograph, and it made lovely music. Then there were games,—guessing games, blindfold games, clapping games, catching games. The people did not seem like strangers at all. They were all so kind and good and acted as if they had always known Flora.

She had to tell them over and over that the only thing she remembered about living in Smithfield was sliding off some fat lady's lap. And they all laughed and tried to guess who the fat lady could have been. And oh, yes,—the red satin suspenders, and the ostrich-plume fan—yes, Mother still had them! They were in the bottom bureau drawer in the spare room at home!

What a happy, happy time it was! And then they all left, with many invitations to Flora to come and see them before she went home. And she said, "Yes, yes, good-by, good-by," to everybody. She could not thank Miss Bolivar enough, after they were all gone. And that night she had a hard time getting to sleep.

In the days that followed, there were more and more exciting things. Suppers out on Miss Bolivar's little side porch, with three little neighbor girls of Flora's age. Picnics in the park. Visits to old friends of Mother's. Shopping trips, pleasure rides on the street-car to the end of the line and back again, and many, many other things. Miss Bolivar

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

did everything to make a little girl happy, and no little girl of twelve could have been happier than Flora. She wrote letter after letter home to Mother and the family. There was so much to tell about,—all the new things she was seeing and doing in the city. The family would want to know everything. It was wonderful to be twelve and take a trip all by yourself,—especially if you went to visit Miss Bolivar.

One day they made a trip to West Magnolia Street to see the old house where the Baxters used to live. It made Flora feel six again. The outside was still the same, with the iron fence and the brick walk up to the porch,—but no cactus. No plants in the bay-window. No lace curtains in the parlor. It was queer to think of strange people living in the old house. Flora had thought of it as staying exactly the same, the way it used to be. Miss Bolivar asked her if she wanted to go inside, but Flora begged not to. A strange man came out of the front door and walked down the street, wondering what the lady and the little girl were standing on the sidewalk staring for. Flora felt queer and a little sad, as they turned away. No, she did not want to go inside.

On the last day of all came a very special treat. Flora and Miss Bolivar went to see the Moving Pictures. Moving Pictures, just like Phil Barker's uncle saw in Chicago! Miss Bolivar took hold of

Flora Again

Flora's hand, for it was so dark inside, she couldn't see a step in front of her. They managed to find seats along the aisle, and Miss Bolivar whispered to Flora to take off her hat. It was just as Jerry had said,—like a Magic Lantern show on a sheet, only the people moved as if they were alive! She must tell Jerry all about it. She squinted her eyes to get used to it. . . . Magic lantern pictures do not flicker and jump so. If it would only be still for a minute! The whole picture jiggled up and down on the sheet . . . two boys were chasing a dog . . . and a policeman was chasing the boys . . . over fences, under fences, into yards, down alleys, crossing railroad tracks, into windows, flop on the floor,—and finally dog and boys and policeman all in a heap, and that was the end. What was it all about? Wasn't it funny? When your eyes got used to it, it was wonderful! How did they make them come to life? She must tell Jerry. . . .

And then the two weeks came to an end. Two weeks cannot last forever, even with the hardest wishing. Too soon, it was time to say good-by to Miss Bolivar and thank her a thousand times for the lovely, lovely visit. Too soon it was time to go to the depot and get on the train, bound for home. Miss Bolivar promised to come soon for a visit, and Flora promised to come back again soon, if Mother would let her.

All the way home on the train, she dreamed of

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

Miss Bolivar and Smithfield. The whole family met her at the depot. And they hardly knew her, because of the new hat Miss Bolivar had given her.

She ran to Mother the first thing and put her arms around her neck.

"Oh, Mother, I think Miss Bolivar's the nicest friend in the whole world!"

And Mother said, "I'm sure of it!"

They all walked down Main Street to get home, with Flora in the middle. The boys fought over her suit-case, and Milly carried the new blue leather pocket-book, which wasn't new any longer. People came running to the windows to look and wave, and said to each other, "There's Flora Baxter back again from her visit to Smithfield!"

At the supper table, Flora did most of the talking, and everybody looked at her and listened to what she said, and everybody asked questions and listened when she answered. It was a new experience to be the most important person in the family. Even Ned and Jerry forgot to tease and listened without interrupting. Milly jumped up to get the salt and pepper which somebody forgot to put on the table and Father insisted upon her having a second helping of everything. It was a new experience—delightful and yet embarrassing. It was like being Grown-Up. Her cheeks flushed with the excitement.

When she had told everything she could think of, Mother told her how much they had enjoyed her

Flora Again

letters. She said she was very proud of them. Not many girls of twelve could write so well.

Flora's eyes sparkled. What a good idea! She wouldn't be a dressmaker and she wouldn't be an artist! Why hadn't she thought of it before? She'd be a writer! She'd write books!

To-night was a special occasion. Flora let the others clear the table and wash the dishes. She ran up to her room and got a Big Six tablet. She settled herself at the sitting room table. She found a pen-knife of Ned's and sharpened her pencil slowly and deliberately.

She would write the True Story of Her Life. So many things to write about. So many things to tell. All the exciting things that had happened since she was a little, little girl. So many things that people didn't understand. So many things to explain . . . about the green-and-brown plaid pieces in the quilt, for instance. All the things that it was impossible to talk about. Mother could read it after she was dead . . . and then she would understand, . . .

She put the point in her mouth and twisted it around to get it wet, so it would write good and black. She wrinkled her forehead. She looked out of the window, meditating. An apple fell off the tree and hit the ground with a thud. A bird winged its way across the patch of blue. A little white cloud slid along, as if it knew where it was going. Dusk began to fall.

A Little Girl of Nineteen Hundred

In large letters at the top, she printed painstakingly:

"THE TRUE STORY OF MY LIFE"
by FLORA BAXTER

Underneath, she wrote carefully:

"Now that I am twelve. . . ."



THE END



TULSA CITY-COUNTY LIBRARY

Fiction ccjcs
A little girl of nineteen hu
Lenski, Lois 0012024751



3 2345 00277889 3